



Synod
2021
2023

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission



Synod 2021-2023

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE



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Introduction: Journeying Together

The entire Catholic Church is called to participate in the upcoming Synod of Bishops! The upcoming Synod is entitled: *"For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission."*

Synod is a Greek word (*synodos*) meaning a meeting or assembly. The two Greek words that make up Synod are *syn* meaning together and *hodos* meaning way or journey.

Pope Francis has called the entire People of God to journey together! This Synod is not just another meeting with oral presentations and written reports. This Synod is a process of journeying together. As the Church, we will listen to each other, dialogue with each other, pray together, discern together and make decisions together for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world!

Pope Francis is asking each local diocese to gather together- clergy, religious and laity- to first listen to each other's joys and hopes, and griefs and anxieties (c.f. *Gaudium et Spes* no. 1). After we listen to each other, we are called to dialogue together on ways we can accompany each other as we seek to grow in holiness. Listening and speaking within the Church always involves prayer. We are listening, dialoguing and praying together so that we can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. The "goal" of this journeying together is not to create a new vision or pastoral plan with objectives. Rather, the goal of our journeying together is to be present with one another, to listen and learn with each other, and to grow closer to the Lord and His Church.

History of Synods in the Catholic Church

The Church journeying together in a Synod is an ancient practice in Christianity rooted in Scripture. In the Acts of the Apostles (Chapter 15), we hear about Peter and Paul being "welcomed by the church, as well as by the apostles and the presbyters" (Acts 15: 4) to listen, discuss, and discern together how to reconcile Jewish and Gentile religious practices. It was after much listening, discussion, and prayerful silence listening for the voice of the Holy Spirit, did the early Church discern how to proclaim the Gospel to all people.

Several Church Fathers wrote about Synodality in the early Church (c. 30 AD- c. 500 AD), including St. John Chrysostom who wrote that the "Church and Synod as synonymous" (Commentary on Psalm 149 see *Preparatory Document* no. 11). Local Churches gathered together with their bishops to discuss matters related to their local situation throughout the first millennium. This local practice grew to provincial (regional) and universal (ecumenical) councils that would gather bishops, clergy, religious and laity together.

The practice of Synodality continued into the second millennium, even as decision-making was reserved more and more to bishops and the Holy See. The Second Vatican Council, an ecumenical council, emphasized the communion of the Church and reclaimed the image

of the Church as the Pilgrim People of God journeying together towards holiness. "...there is but one People of God, which takes its citizens from every race, making them citizens of a kingdom which is of a heavenly and not an earthly nature. For all the faithful scattered throughout the world are in communion with each other in the Holy Spirit..." (*Lumen Gentium* no. 13).

St. Pope Paul VI created the modern structure of the Synod of Bishops in 1965 after the close of the Second Vatican Council. Pope Paul wanted to ensure that the collaboration and dialogue between bishops, theologians, religious and the lay faithful continued after the Second Vatican Council. Since 1967, the Church has held a Synod of Bishops roughly every 2-3 years to examine an issue affecting the Church. At each of these Synods since 1967, bishops have consulted with members of the clergy, religious and the laity. In fact, at these Synods, priests, deacons, religious and laity have been present and have addressed the bishops and Pope. While the "new" aspect of this modern Synod, *"For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission"* is asking each diocesan bishop to listen and consult with his flock, the Synodal process of listening and consulting with the entire People of God is an ancient practice of the Church.

What is Synodality?

Throughout this process, we hear the words: Synod, Synodality, and Synodal process. What do these words mean? Do they mean the same thing?

A helpful short definition of the Synod of Bishops is a gathering of bishops that

1. Fosters closer unity between the bishops and Pope
2. Provides counsel to the Pope on matters of faith and morals, and discipline of the Church
3. Studies questions concerning the Church in the world (c.f. *Code of Canon Law* c. 342).

Voting in the Synod of Bishops is limited to bishops present at the Synod gathering. However, clergy, men and women religious, theologians, catechists, canon lawyers, and lay experts all participate in the Synod gathering with bishops by providing their counsel.

Synodality and the Synodal process are not a gathering or meeting of bishops, nor are they the administrative arm of the Church. Rather, Synodality is the path and process of the Church as communion. It is the communion of all the baptized who are listening to each other, dialoguing with each other and praying together to hear the voice of Holy Spirit as we all seek holiness and proclaim the Gospel. Synodality involves clergy, religious and laity listening and speaking, praying and discerning together, and placing the hopes and concerns of the People of God at the foot of the bishops, who, united with the Pope, decide matters of faith and morals in order to preserve the faith and strengthen the Church throughout the world.

"Synodality, in this perspective, is much more than the celebration of ecclesial meetings and Bishops' assemblies, or a matter of simple internal administration within the Church; it is 'the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* [way of living and being] of the Church, the People of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelizing mission'" (*Preparatory Document* no. 10). "In fact, this People, gathered together by its

Pastors, adheres to the sacred deposit of the Word of God entrusted to the Church, perseveres constantly in the teaching of the Apostles, in fraternal communion, in the breaking of bread, and in prayer, 'so that holding to, practicing, and professing the heritage of the faith, it becomes on the part of the Bishops and Faithful a single common effort'" (*Preparatory Document* no. 13).

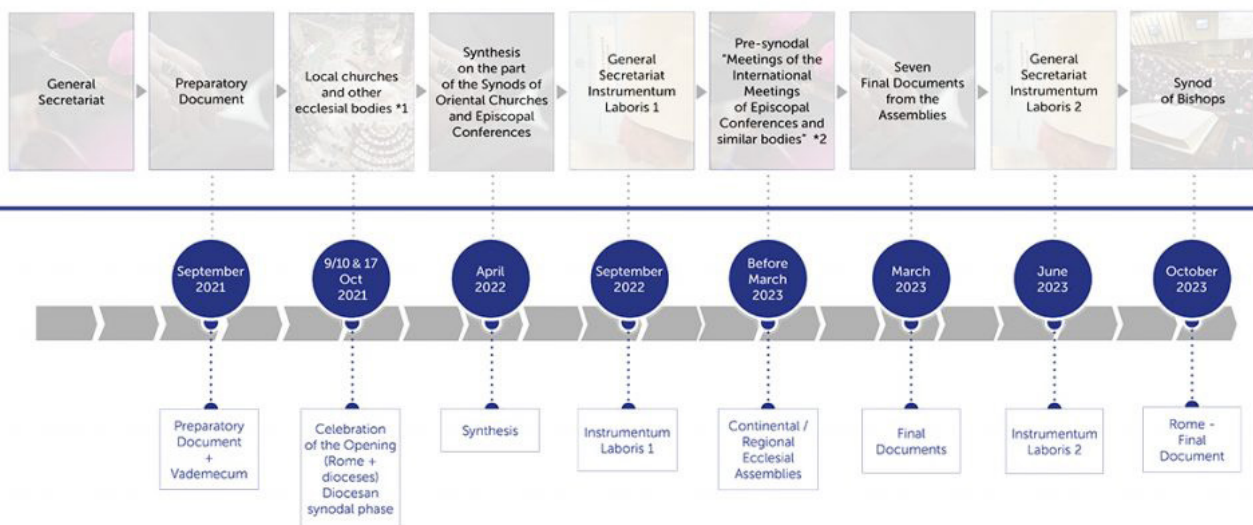
Synodality and the Synodal process are not about engaging others for the purpose of deciding matters through a parliamentary vote. Nor is the primary purpose of Synodality to introduce democratic methods into the Church, where the majority determines how the Church will act. Synodality is also not about promulgating strategic plans or managing pastoral parish ministries through objectives. Synodality is about the entire People of God journeying together to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to become holy.

"The Pastors, established by God as 'authentic guardians, interpreters and witnesses of the faith of the whole Church,' should not be afraid to listen to the Flock entrusted to them. The consultation of the People of God does not imply the assumption within the Church of the dynamics of democracy based on the principle of majority, because there is, at the basis of participation in every Synodal process, a shared passion for the common mission of evangelization and not the representation of conflicting interests. In other words, this is an ecclesial process that can only take place 'at the heart of a hierarchically structured community.' Every Synodal process, in which the Bishops are called to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Church, not by themselves but by listening to the People of God, who 'shares also in Christ's prophetic office' (LG, no. 12), is an evident form of that "journeying together" which makes the Church grow" (*Preparatory Document*, no. 14 see also c.f. *Lumen Gentium* no. 12; CCC nos. 91-93).

As we embark on this Synodal process as the local Church of Washington, let us remember the words of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians, "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good" (1 Thess. 5:19-21).

Timeline of the Universal Synod

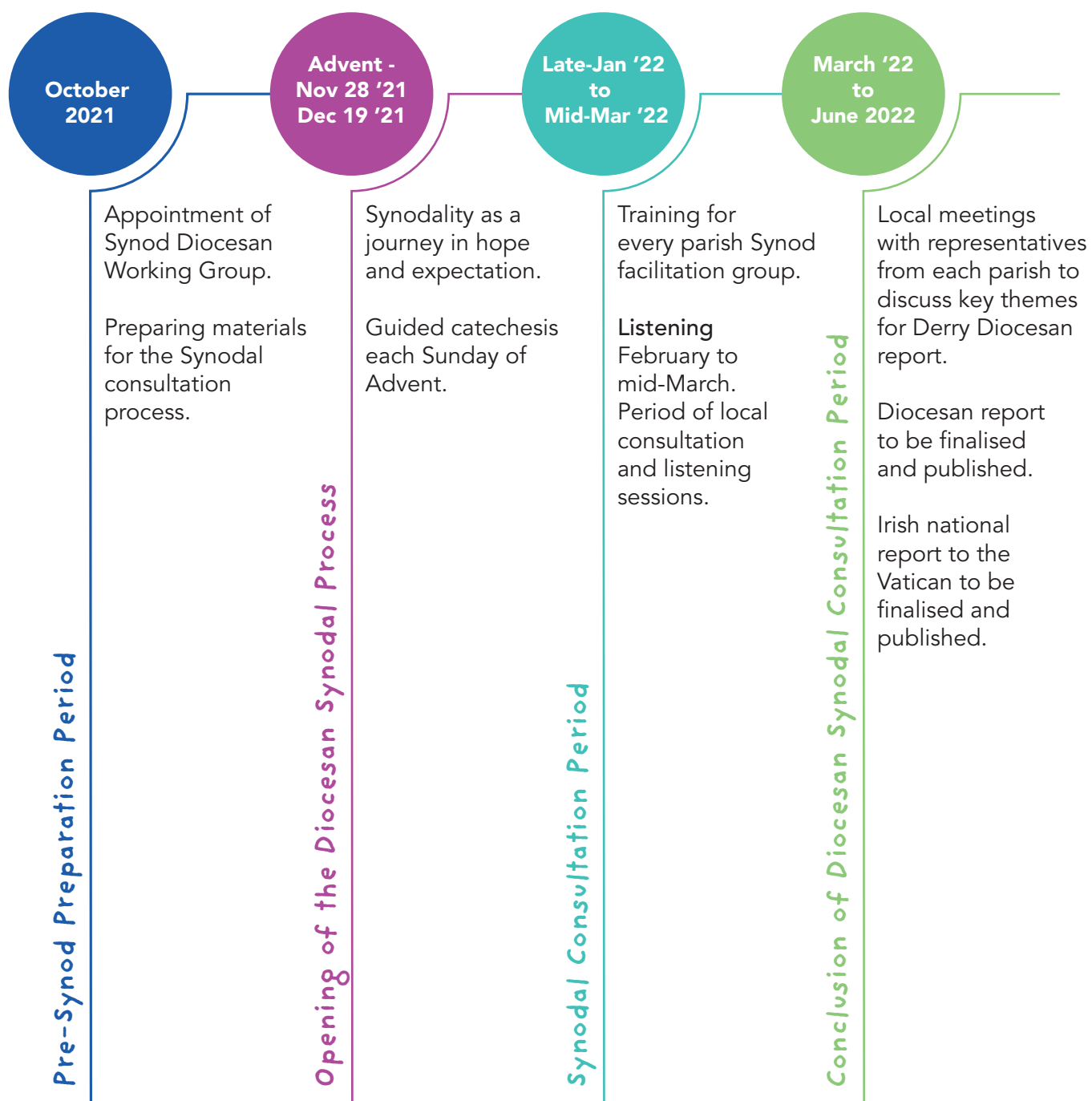
FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION AND MISSION XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS



*1 Dicastries, Consecrated Life (IUSG-USG UNIONS & FEDERATIONS), Associations of the Faithful, Institutions of Higher Education
*2 Africa (SECAM), Oceania (FCBCO), Asia (FABC), Middle East (CPCO), Europa (CEE), Latin America (CELAM), North America (USCCB+CCCCB)



Diocese of Derry Synod Timeline



Guidance for Facilitator

On the following pages, the facilitator will find a detailed outline for the parish listening session. Regular font indicates directional informational. *Italicised* font indicates a script for the facilitator to follow.

Before starting decide which 5 of the 10 core questions are going to be part of the Listening Session.

The role of the facilitator is to track the time devoted to each section, provide time updates (e.g., *"You have five more minutes for this"*), and move the group through the conversations in the time allotted.

Ensure all participants have copy of the Participants Guide (Download at: derrydiocese.org/synod)

Resources & Checklist: see resources for Listening Sessions on page 4 of Listening Session Toolkit.

Facilitator's Detailed Listening Session Outline: Saturday Half-Day Example (3 hours)

Below, the facilitator will find a detailed outline for the parish listening session. Regular font indicates directional informational. *Italicised* font indicates a script for the facilitator to follow.

Before starting decide which 5 of the 10 core questions are going to be part of the Half-day Listening Session.

The role of the facilitator is to track the time devoted to each section, provide time updates (e.g., "You have five more minutes for this"), and move the group through the conversations in the time allotted.

Hospitality (10 minutes)

Welcome and Introduction (2 minutes) Begin on time introducing the session, welcoming participants; introduce yourself to the participants and invite participants to introduce themselves to their fellow group members seated at their table. Be sure to have the pastor and any other parish clergy, religious or parish staff introduce themselves.

Opening Prayer (5 minutes) Have the priest or facilitator lead the opening prayer. (*see Opening Prayer Service at the end of this book*).

Participant Code of Conduct: (3 minutes) Following the opening prayer say:

The Synod process involves active listening. Listening is at the heart of our conversation today. In your Participant's Guide on page 11 you will find the Listening Session Participant Ground Rules. Remember to give your full attention to each other and listening to the voice of God in your hearts. Listen for understanding by taking to heart what other people share. As we share, individuals will speak, one at a time, without interruption, while others listen. Everyone will have a chance to speak and if you like, you may choose to pass.

Every small group will have a note taker; take a moment to select a member of the group to serve as "note taker" for your group discussion.

Give the group a few minutes to name their note taker, then invite assigned note takers to come forward to pick up (*Recorder Notes and pen).

Overview of Synod Process (15 minutes)

Say:

As you arrived today each person received a participant's guide, open the participant guide to the outline for today's gathering on page 8. Throughout this process, the guide, which includes an Introduction, History of Synod in the Church, and What is Synodality, serves as an aid in facilitating our small group discussion. Take a moment to review today's agenda then turn to page 4 and read the Introduction - Journeying Together.

Give participants a few minutes to read silently, then say:

Pope Francis has called the entire People of God to journey together! We gather to listen, dialogue, and pray so that we can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. The "goal" of this journeying together is not to create a new vision or pastoral plan with objectives. Rather, the goal of our journeying together is to be present with

one another, to listen and learn with each other, and to grow closer to the Lord and His Church.

Turn to page 4 - History of Synods in the Church. Take a moment to read silently to yourself.

Give the group a few moments to read then say:

In this gathering, as we listen, dialogue, and pray, we take part in a practice that dates back to the earliest Church. Throughout the history of the Church, the Church has gathered in Synod to open our hearts to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Foundational to religious life is the gathering of the brothers and sisters in prayer, listening to the voices of members, and discernment. A key question in understanding Pope Francis' invitation for the whole Church to journey together is - What is Synodality? Turn to page 5 and take a few minutes to read silently.

Allow the groups a few minutes to read then say, *we have just read,*

A helpful short definition of the Synod of Bishops. It is a gathering of bishops that:

- 1. Fosters closer unity between the bishops and Pope*
- 2. Provides counsel to the Pope on matters of faith and morals, and discipline of the Church*
- 3. Studies questions concerning the Church in the world*

Voting in the Synod of Bishops is limited to bishops present at the Synod gathering. However, clergy, men and women religious, theologians, catechists, canon lawyers, and lay experts all participate in the Synod gathering with bishops by providing their counsel.

We gather today to do just that, to provide our bishops with counsel - also to reflect on the questions put forward to us by Pope Francis, and to listen to our brothers and sisters. Let us begin.

Small Group: The Fundamental Questions (60 minutes)

Say:

As we begin our listening session, let's remember: Our Synod journey takes place in the midst of where the Church ordinarily lives and works in the day to day lives of the faithful. The Synodal process invites each one of us - the People of God to recall that we journey together. Moreover, in that journey of faith, we are called to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. (c.f. Preparatory Document no. 37)

Invite a parishioner to volunteer to read Acts 2:14-21 then say:

As we listen to the Word of God, let us reflect on how the Scripture calls all to share and to proclaim the Good News, to open our hearts to listen to the faith journey of our brothers and sisters, to pray as a community and open our hearts to hear voice of the Holy Spirit.

Invite parishioner to read:

A reading from Acts 2: 14-21

Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them ... "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
R: Thanks be to God.

Instruct the small groups to:

Please turn to page 13 to find the Fundamental Questions. Before we begin sharing with one another, I want to remind everyone that group members will take turns sharing their reflections, one at a time, without interruption, while other group members listen. The note taker will record reflections. Please keep your answers to 1-2 minutes per person.

Read aloud:

A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together."

In your participant booklet, reflect on the following fundamental questions:

- *What are the strengths of the Church here in the Diocese of Derry?*
- *What does this diocese need to do to ensure people are more engaged in finding the way forward for our church here?*

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet. In your reflection on "journeying together," think about:

- *What experiences, in your local parish does this question bring to mind?*
- *What are the joys of your parish life? What are the difficulties and obstacles to active parish life that you have encountered?*

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that:

One member speaks at a time, without interruption, as other members listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person. I will call time and we will then move to the next question.

Allow 10 minutes for small group sharing.

At the end of 10 minutes, pose the following question:

- *Where in these experiences do you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit?*

After 10 minutes, invite participants to take a 20-minute break.

Break (20 minutes)

Core Questions

(60 minutes for 5 Questions. Decide which 5 before start)

Following the break, instruct parishioners to:

In your Participant Guide, open to page 14, on the Core Questions. Thank you for your openness and participation prior to the break. At this time, the process invites us to go deeper.

Keep in mind our fundamental conversation earlier as we explore areas that are at the heart of our community. As a reminder, the note takers will continue to record group sharing, one person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person. I will call time and we will then move to the next question.

Companions on the Journey (*10 minutes)

Say:

"In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road." (Preparatory Document no. 30. Thematic Nuclei)

"Synod" is an ancient and venerable word in the Tradition of the Church, which 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' and to the fact that Christians, His followers, were originally called 'followers of the Way' ". (Vademecum no. 1.2)

The questions we will consider under Companions on the Journey are:

- *In our Church and parish, who is included?*
- *Who is excluded?*

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet.

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that:

One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person, summarizing your reflections on the three questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 10 minutes total for this section.

Listening (*10 minutes)

Say:

"Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice." (Preparatory Document no. 30)

"The meaning of the journey to which we are all called is above all that of discovering the face and form of a Synodal Church, in which "everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit." (Preparatory Document no. 15)

The questions we will consider under Listening are:

- *How is God speaking to us through the voices that are in our midst?*

- *How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore, including those on the margins?*
- *What space is there to listen to the voices on the margins, especially cultural groups, women, the disabled, those who experience poverty, marginalisation, or social exclusion?*
- *What are the obstacles to listening?*

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet.

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that: *One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person, summarizing your reflections on the three questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 10 minutes total for this section.*

Speaking Out (*10 minutes)

Say:

Let's move onto our next core question: Speaking Out.

"All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity."

(Preparatory Document no. 30)

"The Pastors, established by God as 'authentic guardians, interpreters and witnesses of the faith of the whole Church' should not be afraid to listen to the flock entrusted to them. The consultation of the People of God does not imply the assumption within the Church of the dynamics of democracy based on the principle of majority because there is, at the basis of participation in every Synodal process, a shared passion for the common mission of evangelization and not the representation of conflicting interests." (Preparatory Document no. 14)

The questions we will consider under Speaking Out are:

- *What enables or hinders you from speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in your parish and society?*
- *What space is there in your parish for the voice of people, including active and inactive members of our faith?*

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet.

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that: *One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person, summarizing your reflections on the two questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 10 minutes total for this section.*

Celebration: (*10 minutes)

Say:

Let's move onto our next core question: Celebration. "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles." (Acts 2:42-43)

"Journeying together" is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist. (Preparatory Document no. 30)

The questions we will consider for Celebration are:

- *How do prayer and liturgical celebrations, especially Sunday Mass, inspire and guide you and your parish community?*
- *How does the parish invite all baptised Catholics, including our ethnic communities, youth, families, and persons with disabilities and their families, into the active life of the parish, especially Sunday Mass?*

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet.

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that: One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person, summarizing your reflections on the three questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 10 minutes total for this section.

Sharing Responsibility For Our Common Mission (*10 minutes)

Say:

Let's move onto our next core question: 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. A Synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church." (Preparatory Document no. 30)

The members of the People of God are united by Baptism, and "if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, pastors and dispenser of mysteries on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to dignity and to the activity common to all the Faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ." (Lumen Gentium, no. 32)

The questions we will consider under this core question are:

- *How are the baptised members of your parish able to participate in the mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel by their lived experience?*
- *What hinders people from being active in your parish?*

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet.

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that: One member speaks at a time, without interruption, as other members listen. Please keep your responses

to 1-2 minutes per person, summarizing your reflections on the four questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 10 minutes total for this section.

Dialogue in Church and Society (*10 minutes)

Say:

"Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding." (Preparatory Document no. 30. Thematic Nuclei).

"The second perspective considers how the People of God journeys together with the entire human family. Thus, our gaze will focus on the state of relations, dialogue, and possible common initiatives with believers of other religions, with people who are distant from the faith, as well as with specific social environments and groups, with their institutions (the world of politics, culture, economics, finance, labor, trade unions, and business associations, non-governmental and civil society organizations, popular movements, minorities of various kinds, the poor and the excluded, etc.)." (Preparatory Document no. 29.)

The questions we will consider for Dialogue in Church and Society are:

- *To what extent and how do diverse peoples within our community come together?*
- *To what issues does the Church need to pay particular attention?*

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet.

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that: *One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person, summarizing your reflections on the three questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 10 minutes total for this section.*

Sharing on Ecumenism (*10 minutes)

Say:

"The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey." (Preparatory Document no. 30. Thematic Nuclei).

The questions we will consider for Sharing on Ecumenism are:

- *What is our relationship with members of other Christian traditions?*
- *What fruits have we drawn from sharing with them? What are the difficulties?*
- *What are our experiences with dialogue and collaboration with those who have no religious affiliation?*

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet.

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that: *One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person, summarizing your reflections on the three questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 10 minutes total for this section.*

Authority and Participation (*10 minutes)

Say:

"A synodal Church is a participatory and co-responsible Church." (Preparatory Document no. 30. Thematic Nuclei).

"One of the fruits of the Second Vatican Council was the institution of the Synod of Bishops. While the Synod of Bishops has taken place up until now as a gathering of bishops with and under the authority of the Pope, the Church increasingly realizes that synodality is the path for the entire People of God. Hence the Synodal Process is no longer only an assembly of bishops but a journey for all the faithful, in which every local Church has an integral part to play." (Vademecum no. 1.3)

The questions we will consider for Sharing on Ecumenism are:

- *How could authority be better exercised in your parish?*
- *In a time of diminishing numbers of clergy, how can the authority of one become the responsibility of the baptised?*

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet.

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that: *One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person, summarizing your reflections on the two questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 10 minutes total for this section.*

Discerning And Deciding (*10 minutes)

Say:

"In a Synodal style, we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community."

"Synodal style of decision-making is to listen first, dialogue, pray, discern, and then the pastor makes a decision on behalf of community. A Synodal Church does not making decisions to accomplish pre-identified priorities. "In a Synodal Church, the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will." (Vademecum no. 1.4).

The questions we will consider for *Discerning And Deciding* are:

- *How are decisions taken in your parish or diocese?*
- *How does your parish use the methods of listening and speaking (consultation) to make decisions?*
- *How does your parish/and the Diocese of Derry promote participation in decision-making within the hierarchical and diocesan structures of the Church?*
- *Does the decision-making methods of your parish help you to listen to all members of the community including those who are on the margins of parish life?*

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet.

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that:

One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person, summarizing your reflections on the three questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 10 minutes total for this section.

Forming ourselves on Synodality (*10 minutes)

Say:

"Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning."

"... 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). (Vademecum no. 1.2).

The questions we will consider for *Forming ourselves on Synodality* are:

- *How does our Church community form/assist people to be more capable of 'walking together', listening to one another, participating in mission and engaging in dialogue?*
- *What formation is offered to help us build a deeper relationship with Jesus?*

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet.

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that:

One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person, summarizing your reflections on the three questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 10 minutes total for this section.

Final Question: The Holy Spirit (10 minutes)

Say:

We hear in Paul's Letter to the Romans: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13)

Here is our final question:

- *From your small group sharing, name one insight where you heard the voice of the Holy Spirit today?*

Please keep your responses to 1 minute per person. Allow 10 minutes total for this section.

Closing:

*I would like to thank parishioners for sharing and listening. Please turn to page 24. And let us pray together **The Prayer for the Synod.***

At the conclusion of prayer, say:

Note takers should bring their documentation to the front of the room and thank you all who participated in the parish listening session. The recorded comments from the groups will be compiled into a parish report, two parish delegates will be appointed to attend a diocesan Synod along with clergy and religious representatives. Finally, the regional reports will contribute to the creation of our diocesan synthesis report. Thank you and God Bless.

Facilitator's Detailed Listening Session Outline: Three-Week Evening Example

Below, the facilitator will find a detailed outline for the parish listening session. Regular font indicates directional informational. *Italicized* font indicates a script for the facilitator to follow.

Before starting decide which 5 of the 10 core questions are going to be part of the Three-week Listening Session.

The role of the facilitator is to track the time devoted to each section, provide time updates (e.g., "You have five more minutes for this"), and move the group through the conversations in the time allotted.

WEEK ONE

Welcome and Introduction (10 minutes) Offer light hospitality and greet people as they arrive. Begin on time introducing the session, welcoming participants; introduce yourself to the participants and invite participants to introduce themselves to their fellow group members seated at their table. Be sure to have the pastor and any other parish clergy, religious or parish staff introduce themselves.

Opening Prayer (5 minutes) Have the pastor or facilitator lead the opening prayer. (see Opening Prayer Service at the end of this book).

Participant Ground Rules: (5 minutes) Following the opening prayer say:

The Synod process involves active listening. Listening is at the heart of our conversation today. In your Participant's Guide on page 11 you will find the Listening Session Participant Ground Rules. Remember to give your full attention to each other and listening to the voice of God in your hearts. Listen for understanding by taking to heart what other people share. As we share, individuals will speak, one at a time, without interruption, while others listen. Everyone will have a chance to speak and if you like, you may choose to pass.

Every small group will have a note taker; take a moment to select a member of the group to serve as "note taker" for your group discussion.

Give the group a few minutes to name their note taker, then invite assigned note takers to come forward to pick up (*Recorder Sheets and pen).

Overview of Synod Process (20 minutes)

Say:

As you arrived today each person received a participant's guide, open the participant guide to the outline for today's gathering page 8. Throughout this process, the guide, which includes an Introduction, History of Synod in the Church, and What is Synodality, serves as an aid in facilitating our small group discussion. Take a moment to review today's agenda then turn to page 4 and read the Introduction - Journeying Together.

Give participants a few minutes to read silently, then say:

Pope Francis has called the entire People of God to journey together! We gather to listen, dialogue, and pray so that we can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. The "goal" of this journeying together is not to create a new vision or pastoral plan with objectives. Rather, the goal of our journeying together is to be present

with one another, to listen and learn with each other, and to grow closer to the Lord and His Church. Turn to page 4 - History of Synods in the Church. Take a moment to read silently to yourself.

Give the group a few moments to read then say:

In this gathering, as we listen, dialogue, and pray, we take part in a practice that dates back to the earliest Church. Throughout the history of the Church, the Church has gathered in Synod to open our hearts to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Foundational to religious life is the gathering of the brothers and sisters in prayer, listening to the voices of members, and discernment. A key question in understanding Pope Francis' invitation for the whole Church to journey together is - What is Synodality? Turn to page 5 and take a few minutes to read silently.

Allow the groups a few minutes to read then say, *we have just read,*

A helpful short definition of the Synod of Bishops - it is a gathering of bishops that

- 1) Fosters closer unity between the bishops and Pope*
- 2) Provides counsel to the Pope on matters of faith and morals, and discipline of the Church*
- 3) Studies questions concerning the Church in the world.*

Voting in the Synod of Bishops is limited to bishops present at the Synod gathering. However, clergy, men and women religious, theologians, catechists, canon lawyers, and lay experts all participate in the Synod gathering with bishops by providing their counsel.

We gather today to do just that, to provide our bishops with counsel - also to reflect on the questions put forward to us by Pope Francis, to listen to our brothers and sisters. Let us take a short break and then we will begin the listening process.

Break (5 minutes)

Small Group: The Fundamental Questions (40 minutes)

Say:

As we begin our listening session, remember: Our Synod journey takes place in the midst of where the Church ordinarily lives and works in the day to day lives of the faithful. The Synodal process invites each one of us - the People of God to recall that we journey together. Moreover, in that journey of faith we are called to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. (c.f. Preparatory Document no. 27)

Invite a parishioner to volunteer to read Acts 2:14-21 then say:

As we listen to the Word of God, let us reflect on how the Scripture calls all to share and to proclaim the Good News, to open our hearts to listen to the faith journey of our brothers and sisters, to pray as a community and open our hearts to hear voice of the Holy Spirit.

Invite parishioner to read:

A reading from Acts 2: 14-21

Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them ... "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

R: Thanks be to God

Instruct the small groups to:

Please turn to page 12 to find the Fundamental Questions. Before we begin sharing with one another, I want to remind everyone that group members will take turns sharing their reflections, one at a time, without interruption, while others in the group listen. The note taker will record reflections. Please keep your answers to 1-2 minutes per person.

Read aloud:

A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together."

In your participant booklet, reflect on the following fundamental questions:

- *What are the strengths of the Church here in the Diocese of Derry?*
- *What does this diocese need to do to ensure people are more engaged in finding the way forward for our church here?*

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet. In your reflection on "journeying together," think about:

- *What experiences, in your local parish, does this question bring to mind? What are the joys of your parish life?*
- *What are the difficulties and obstacles to active parish life that you have encountered?*

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that: *One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person. I will call time and we will then move to the next question.*

Allow 10 minutes for small group sharing.

At the end of 10 minutes, pose the following question:

- *Where in these experiences do you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit?*

Closing:

I would like to thank you all for sharing and listening. Please turn to page 24. And let us pray together The

Prayer for the Synod.

At the conclusion of prayer, say:

Note takers should bring their documentation to the front of the room and thank you all who participated in this week's listening session. The recorded comments from the groups will be compiled into a parish report and two parish delegates will be appointed to attend a diocesan Synod along with clergy and religious representatives. Finally, the regional reports will contribute to the creation of our diocesan synthesis report. Please join us for the next two weeks and please feel free to invite others to join us! Thank you and God Bless.

WEEK TWO

Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes) Offer light hospitality and greet people as they arrive. Begin on time introducing the session, welcoming back last week's participants and new participants; introduce yourself to the participants and invite participants to introduce themselves to their fellow group members seated at their table. Be sure to have the pastor and any other parish clergy, religious or parish staff introduce themselves.

Opening Prayer (5 minutes) Have the priest or facilitator lead the opening prayer. (see Opening Prayer Service at the end of this book).

Participant Ground Rules: (5 minutes) Following the opening prayer say:

Again, thank you all of you who are returning for our second of three listening sessions and thank you for any people who are joining us for the first time tonight. Before we begin, I am going to review some items. The Synod process involves active listening. Listening is at the heart of our conversation today. In your Participant's Guide on page 11 you will find the Listening Session Participant Ground Rules. Remember to give your full attention to each other and listening to the voice of God in your hearts. Listen for understanding by taking to heart what other people share. As we share, individuals will speak, one at a time, without interruption, while others listen. Everyone will have a chance to speak and if you may choose to pass.

Every small group will have a note taker; take a moment to select a member of the group to serve as "note taker" for your group discussion.

Give the group a few minutes to name their note taker, then invite assigned note takers to come forward to pick up (*Recorder Sheets and pen).

Small Group: Listening (15 minutes)

Say:

This week, we will reflecting, listening and sharing on the Synod's Core Questions. Open to p. 14, on the Core Questions.

Keep in mind our fundamental conversation from last week as we explore areas that are at the heart of our community. As a reminder, the note takers will continue to record group sharing, one member speaks at a time, without interruption, as other members listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person. I will call time and we will then move to the next question.

Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart without prejudice. The meaning of the journey to which we are all called is above all that of discovering the face and form of a Synodal Church, in which "everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit. (Preparatory Document no. 15 and 30)

The questions we will consider under Listening are:

- *How is God speaking to us through the voices that are in our midst?*
- *How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore, including those on the margins?*
- *What space is there to listen to the voices on the margins, especially cultural groups, women, the disabled, those who experience poverty, marginalisation, or social exclusion?*
- *What are the obstacles to listening?*

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet.

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that: *One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person, summarizing your reflections on the three questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 15 minutes.*

Small Group: Speaking Out (20 minutes)

Say:
"Let's move onto our next core question: Speaking Out. All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity." (Preparatory Document no. 30)

"The Pastors, established by God as 'authentic guardians, interpreters and witnesses of the faith of the whole Church' should not be afraid to listen to the flock entrusted to them. The consultation of the People of God does not imply the assumption within the Church of the dynamics of democracy based on the principle of majority because there is, at the basis of participation in every Synodal process, a shared passion for the common mission of evangelization and not the representation of conflicting interests." (Preparatory Document no. 14)

The questions we will consider under Speaking Out are:

- *What enables or hinders you from speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in your parish and society?*
- *What space is there in your parish for the voice of people, including active and inactive members of our faith?*

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet.

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that:

One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person, summarising your reflections on the two questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 20 minutes total for this section.

After you call time for this section, announce a short break.

Let us take a short break and then we will begin the next core question to reflect on.

Break (5 minutes)

Small Group: Sharing Responsibility For Our Common Mission (25 minutes)

Say:

Let's move onto our next core question: 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. A Synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.

(Preparatory Document no. 30)

The members of the People of God are united by Baptism, and "if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, pastors and dispenser of mysteries on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to dignity and to the activity common to all the Faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ." (Lumen Gentium, no. 32)

The questions we will consider under this core question are:

- *How are the baptised members of your parish able to participate in the mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel by their lived experience?*
- *What hinders people from being active in your parish?*

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that:

One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person, summarizing your reflections on the four questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 25 minutes total for this section.

Closing:

I would like to thank you all for sharing and listening. Please turn to page 24. And let us pray together The Prayer for the Synod.

At the conclusion of prayer, say:

Note takers should bring their documentation to the front of the room and thank you all who participated in this week's listening session. The recorded comments from the groups will be compiled into a parish report and two parish delegates will be appointed to attend a diocesan Synod along with

clergy and religious representatives. Finally, the regional reports will contribute to the creation of our diocesan synthesis report. Please join us next week for our final session and please feel free to invite others to join us! Thank you and God Bless.

WEEK THREE

Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes) Offer light hospitality and greet people as they arrive. Begin on time introducing the session, welcoming back last week's participants and new participants; introduce yourself to the participants and invite participants to introduce themselves to their fellow group members seated at their table. Be sure to have the pastor and any other parish clergy, religious or parish staff introduce themselves.

Opening Prayer (5 minutes) Have the pastor or facilitator lead the opening prayer. (see Opening Prayer Service at the end of this book).

Participant Ground Rules: (5 minutes) Following the opening prayer say:

Again, thank you to all of you who are returning for our third and final listening session and thank you for any people who are joining us for the first time tonight. Before we begin, I am going to review some items. The Synod process involves active listening. Listening is at the heart of our conversation today. In your Participant's Guide on page 11 you will find the Listening Session Participant Ground Rules. Remember to give your full attention to each other and listening to the voice of God in your hearts. Listen for understanding by taking to heart what other people share. As we share, individuals will speak, one at a time, without interruption, while others listen. Everyone will have a chance to speak and if you like, you may choose to pass.

Every small group will have a note taker; take a moment to select a member of the group to serve as "note taker" for your group discussion.

Give the group a few minutes to name their note taker, then invite assigned note takers to come forward to pick up (*Recorder Notes and pen).

Small Group: Discerning And Deciding (20 minutes)

Say:

Let's move onto our next core question: Discerning and Deciding. In a Synodal style, we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community. Synodal style of decision-making is to listen first, dialogue, pray, discern, and then the pastor makes a decision on behalf of community. A Synodal Church does not make decisions to accomplish pre-identified priorities. "In a Synodal Church, the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will." (Vademecum no. 1.4)

The questions we will consider for Discerning and Deciding are:

- *How are decisions taken in your parish or diocese?*
- *How does your parish use the methods of listening and speaking (consultation) to make decisions?*

- *How does your parish/and the Diocese of Derry promote participation in decision-making within the hierarchical and diocesan structures of the Church?*
- *Does the decision-making methods of your parish help you to listen to all members of the community including those who are on the margins of parish life?*

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that:

One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person, summarizing your reflections on the three questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 20 minutes total for this section.

After you call time for this section, announce a short break.

Let us take a short break and then we will begin the next core question to reflect on.

Break (5 minutes)

Small Group: Celebration (20 minutes)

Say:

Let's move onto our next core question: Celebration. "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles" (Acts 2:42-43).

"Journeying together" is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist. (Preparatory Document no. 30)

The questions we will consider for Discerning and Deciding are:

- *How do prayer and liturgical celebrations, especially Sunday Mass, inspire and guide you and your parish community?*
- *How does the parish invite all baptised Catholics, including our ethnic communities, youth, families, and persons with disabilities and their families, into the active life of the parish, especially Sunday Mass?*

After a sufficient time for participants to write down their reflections, remind the group that: *One member speaks at a time, without interruption, as other members listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person, summarizing your reflections on the three questions. I will call time and we will then move to the next question. Allow 20 minutes total for this section.*

Small Group Final Question: The Holy Spirit (20 minutes)

Say:

We hear in Paul's Letter to the Romans: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13)

Here is our final question:

From your small group sharing, name one insight where you heard the voice of the Holy Spirit today?

Please keep your responses to 1 minute per person. Allow 20 minutes total for this section.

Closing:

I would like to thank you all for sharing and listening. Please turn to page 24. And let us pray together The Prayer for the Synod.

At the conclusion of prayer, say:

Note takers should bring their documentation to the front of the room and thank you all who participated in this week's listening session. The recorded comments from the groups will be compiled into a parish report and two parish delegates will be appointed to attend a diocesan Synod along with clergy and religious representatives. Finally, the regional reports will contribute to the creation of our diocesan synthesis report. Thank you and God Bless.

Prayer for the Synod

Adsumus (We Stand Before You)

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*.

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.

Opening Prayer for the Parish Listening Session

Opening Prayer:

L: Come, Holy Spirit

R: Fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

L: Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R: and you shall renew the face of the earth

L: O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructed the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Spirit we may know what is right and always rejoice in his consolation, through Christ our Lord.

R: Amen

Psalm 100

R/ Serve the Lord with Gladness

L/ Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Serve the Lord with gladness

Come before him, singing for joy.

R/ Serve the Lord with Gladness

Know that he, the Lord, is God.

He made us, we belong to him,

We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

R/ Serve the Lord with Gladness

Go within his gates, giving thanks.

Enter his courts with songs of praise.

Give thanks to him and bless his name.

R/ Serve the Lord with Gladness

Closing Prayer: We make our prayer complete and perfect by praying together

Our Father...

