

For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission

Synodality means taking a spiritual journey together.

Pope Francis has called all in the Church to meet, talk, and listen to each other as we also strive to listen and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit today.

Therefore, on Saturday, October 8, 2022, at 10:00 AM, there will be a **Listening Session** for our Parish in Our Lady of the Assumption Church for the People of the Parish to speak with Father Paul and Father Pablo. Please Plan to attend!

These quotes help describe the nature of Synodality and how it should be used:

The following quotes are from: *VADEMECUM: FOR THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY*, The Official Handbook for Listening and Discernment in Local Churches, Published by Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, Via della Conciliazione 34, Vatican City, September 2021

“By journeying together and reflecting together on the journey that has been made, the Church will be able to learn through Her experience which processes can help Her to live communion, to achieve participation, to open Herself to mission. Our ‘journeying together’ is, in fact, what most effectively enacts and manifests the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God.”

“Addressing this question together requires listening to the Holy Spirit, who like the wind ‘blows where it will; you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes’ (Jn 3:8), remaining open to the surprises that the Spirit will certainly prepare for us along the way.”

“[Synodality is] ‘the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* 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.’ Thus are intertwined the main axes of a synodal Church that the title of the Synod proposes: **communion, participation, and mission**.” (Emphasis added)

“The Pastors, established by God as ‘authentic guardians, interpreters and witnesses of the faith of the whole Church,’¹⁶ 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.’ It is in the fruitful bond between the *sensus fidei* of the People of God and the magisterial function of the Pastors that the unanimous consensus of the whole Church in the same faith is realized. 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. St. Benedict emphasizes how ‘the Lord often reveals the most prudent course to be followed’ to those who do not occupy important positions in the community (in that case, the youngest); thus, the Bishops should take care to reach out to everyone, so that, in the orderly unfolding of the synodal journey, what the apostle Paul recommends to the communities may be realized: ‘Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good’ (1 Thess 5:19-21)”.

SYNODAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Before coming to the Listening Session, you should spend some time reflecting on your own thoughts and responses to each of these questions. Then, on Saturday, please be willing to share your thoughts with our brothers and sisters in the parish.

1. **Fundamental Question:**

A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.” How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

In responding to this question, we are invited to recall:

What experiences of our Parish does this question call to mind? What joys did they bring? What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds did they reveal? What insights have they elicited?

Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound? What is the Spirit asking of us? What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects for change, the steps to be taken? Where do we register a consensus? What paths are opening up for our Parish?

2. **Celebrating:**

“Journeying together” is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist. How do prayer and liturgical celebration inspire and direct our “journeying together”? How do they inspire the most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful at Mass?

3. **Co-Responsible in the Mission:**

As baptized Catholics, we are all called to be missionary disciples and bring others to know Jesus. Synodality, walking together, and listening to each other are ways in which we can do that. So how can we live out the mission of the Church through our lives? How does the community support its members committed to service in society (in social and political commitment, in scientific research and teaching, in the promotion of social justice, in the protection of human rights, and in caring for the common home, etc.)?

4. **Forming Ourselves in Synodality:**

To live out our faith, it is vital to learn how to journey together, and it is also essential for families and communities. So how do we form people, especially those who hold roles of responsibility within the Christian community, to make them more capable of “journeying together,” listening to one another, and engaging in dialogue?