For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission

Reflection Guide for Each Session

MAY 18, MAY 25, JUNE 1, 2022
Introduction

In October 2021, Pope Francis opened the Synod on Synodality, inviting the whole Church to speak and to listen together to the voice of the Holy Spirit. The beginning of the *Preparatory Document* contains the declaration that “the Church of God is convoked in Synod” (#1).

On 18 May, 25 May and 1 June 2022, the Office for Evangelization and Catechesis hosted a webinar series titled *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*, inviting leaders of catechesis and evangelization to reflect on the ongoing synodal discussions in our dioceses, eparchies, parishes and missions throughout Canada. A call to listen and speak as one Church, the three recorded sessions of *For a Synodal Church* provide starting points for:

- Discussion on synodality as the way of being the Church today,
- Conversation about listening together to the voice of the Holy Spirit,
- Reflection on our missionary call to be Church.

A reflection guide is included and may be used by individuals or in small groups after viewing the webinar. You may wish to offer in-person or online gatherings to view the webinar followed by a period of reflection and discussion.

Materials

It may be helpful to have the following materials:

- A Catholic Bible;
- The video recordings of each session (if not viewing the videos as a group);
- The *Vademecum* for the Synod on Synodality available online; and
- Additional materials and resources provided by each keynote presenter (optional).

Guidelines for Discussions

- All participants are invited to contribute to the discussions; some may choose not to speak. The group must respect each person’s decision.
- One person speaks at a time.
- Participants, if they choose, may respond to the speaker in a helpful yet non-judgmental/non-confrontational way.
- Respect each other and commit to confidentiality to promote trust.
- Sometimes a person requires more time to tell their story than is allotted in the discussion. The facilitator may offer to speak with a person one-on-one during a break or after the session.
Session 1: Communion: Journeying Together

Keynotes: Moira McQueen, LL.B., M.Div., PhD. and David Dayler, MTS

1. David explains that synodality is a walking together, a journeying together toward a permanent conversion.
   How can I incorporate a spirit of synodality, of walking together, in my ministries and pastoral activities?

2. Dr. McQueen explains that when Bishops in early Synods talked about matters, resolved disputes, raised new points and new questions: context was important, leadership was important, but the Holy Spirit had priority.
   Does the Holy Spirit have priority in my ministries and pastoral activities? How can I better give priority to the Holy Spirit?

3. Each of us was created by God and meant to be in communion. God uses all our talents for the good of all. Every voice can be used for the discernment of God’s will by the community of faith.
   In my ministries and pastoral activities, am I listening to the voices of the community we accompany? Am I open to hearing, to listening, to those in my community? How can I better listen to people—to their concerns and daily struggles?

4. What we think our parish needs might be different from what our parish really needs.
   How can we as a parish community engage in synodal processes that will help us to discern more precisely the needs of our parish community?
Session 2: Participation: A Co-responsibility

Keynote: Sr. Chantal Desmarais, SCSM

1. Sister Chantal says that hearing is not the same as listening. To listen is to direct our full attention toward the voice of another. To discern, we listen to one another, Scripture and the Holy Spirit.

   How might respectful listening and discernment affect my own ministries or pastoral activities?

2. Bishops, priests, consecrated religious, and lay people—*together*—are the Church, all journeying together on a path in the same direction. This is the way to be synodal.

   Is this how I see the Church? How can understanding the synodality of the Church help my ministries and pastoral activities?

3. Sister Chantal reminds us that we all share a common mission, the mission of Jesus. All the Baptized are called to take part in this common mission.

   What gifts do I bring to my community that contribute to the fulfilment of the mission of Jesus Christ?

4. Sister Chantal reminded us that we share a co-responsibility in the mission of the Church.

   How do we support each other in our co-responsibility for the mission of Jesus Christ?

5. In pastoral decisions, we must discern where the Holy Spirit wants us to go. How do we discern where the Holy Spirit is calling us?
Session 3: Going Forth: A Missionary Church
Keynote: His Eminence Gérald Cyprien Cardinal Lacroix, Archbishop of Québec and Primate of Canada

1. The Synodal Process is not a theoretical abstract nor is it confined to the Synod on Synodality. It is an on-the-ground method of consultation, listening and discernment by stakeholders. In this way, all those involved in the process of synodality listen to one another, as they provide insights and direction that assist the community leader in decision-making.

   How can I enter into the stance of active listening to which the synodal process calls me?

2. Cardinal Lacroix said that we must live as a people who walk together in communion, with full participation, so that our mission may be fruitful.

   When have I witnessed examples of this kind of walking together leading to fruitful mission? How can I bring that emphasis on communion and full participation into my ministries and pastoral activities?

3. As missionary disciples we must walk together to address the challenges our ministries and pastoral activities face.

   What are some ways we can actively support one another?

4. In Jn 13:35, Jesus said, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

   How will we come to live this concretely in our daily lives in our families, our parish communities, our groups, and our diocese or eparchy?