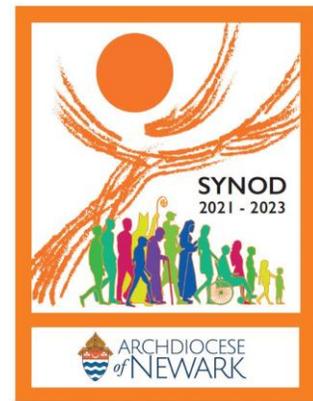




SYNOD LISTENING SESSIONS

An Example for an Evening Session

7:00 PM to 9:30 PM or can be adapted to a 3 hour Morning Session



FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH
COMMUNION • PARTICIPATION • MISSION

7:00pm **Welcome by Pastor or Leader**

Introductions in the table groups

7:10pm **Opening Song**

All Are Welcome (or other appropriate song)

Gathering Prayer

Leader Come Holy Spirit

All fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

Leader Send forth your Spirit and they shall be re-created.
And You shall renew the face of the earth.

All O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit,
did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
grant that by the same Spirit
we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation,
through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

The Word of God Acts 2: 1-11, 14-19

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together
And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind,
and it filled the entire house in which they were.

Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire,
which parted and came to rest on each one of them.
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem.
At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused
because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

They were astounded, and in amazement they asked,
“Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans

Then how does each of us hear them in his native language?
We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites,
inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia,
Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,
Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome,
both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs,
yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.”

They were all astounded and bewildered, and said to one another,
“What does this mean?”

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them,
Let this be known to you, and listen to my words.

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...
And I will work wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below...

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Scripture Reflection Question

- How have I experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in my life?
- In what ways do I see the Holy Spirit working in my parish?

Prayer

Leader

Come Holy Spirit,
as we move into our reflection session

All

Be with us as a discerning guide to speak what is in our heart,
our experience of Church, our joys and sorrows, hopes and dreams.
May we listen carefully to each other
so that we may discern how you, Holy Spirit,
are calling us be church at this time in our history.

Leader

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All

Amen.

7:40pm **Listening Session Process**

Video by Cardinal Tobin – What is the Synod on *Synodality* - why it is important
Explanation of the process by Main Facilitator

- **Table Facilitator**

The table facilitator ensures that all participants have the opportunity to dialogue about the questions, taking care to focus on the dynamics of group sharing and listening.

- **Table Scribe**

The table scribe records key points of the conversations and all discern what are the key themes to present to the Holy Father through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (USCCB)

- **Feedback**

A few groups may give feedback toward the end of the session.

Focus of the Synod on Synodality

How is the Holy Spirit calling us as a Church in the 21st Century?

A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.”

The word “synod” traces its roots to the first centuries of the Church. Coming from Greek words meaning the “same road,” synod and synodality are expressions of the fundamental mystery of the Church: people who are gathered from every corner of the earth to be “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises” of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2,9).

---- Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, CSsR

As we begin our listening and sharing, all are invited to consider what the Holy Spirit is calling us to, what paths are being opened, and what our "inner spiritual movements" are: joy or sadness, confidence or anxiety, hope or no hope, or other.

Table Process Suggestions to Help Participants Focus

- Facilitator asks all to reflect silently for five minutes, preparing their thoughts on each question.
- Each person can share his/her ideas for a maximum of three minutes.
- All reflect silently again, then sharing for a few minutes what enlightened or resonated with them.

7:40pm **Core Question ONE – 45 Minutes**

How is this “journeying together” happening today in your parish community, campus ministry, university, school, youth group, religious congregation, or other area of Church life that you might participate in?

Pope Francis talks about “journeying together” or “walking together” down the same road. This means that we collaborate together and share responsibility for the building up of the whole Church and our parish or other ministry through evangelization, participation in worship, social justice, councils, and governance. As you reflect on the questions below, describe about how you have or have not experienced “walking together.”

- Share a few examples of ways that you have experienced this “walking together” in your parish. What is challenging about participating fully in your parish?
For example:
 - How are authority or governance, teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice in your local parish?
 - How do you as a parish use the methods of listening and speaking (consultation) to make decisions about pastoral and financial needs?
 - In what ways do you as a parish invite all baptized Catholics. All the baptized include ethnic and cultural communities, youth, families, persons with disabilities and their families, those living in poverty or social exclusion, and more into the active life of the parish, especially Sunday Mass?
- What prevents us from “walking together?” What hinders you from being a part of the parish and/or speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly?
- Pope Francis encourages us to reach out beyond our active parish community and observe who is in our local area. It is essential to look at who “used to be at our parish,” and who is not here, and those who might feel left out or on the margins.
 - Do we as a parish, reach out collectively or individually to those who are no longer participating in church? What helps or hinders us?
 - What are some ways to find out why they are not participating?
 - What do we have to offer and attract those who are not participating?
- As a result of our discussion, what are three steps we can take in our parish to grow in “walking together”?
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

- Where in these shared experiences do you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit calling us to move forward?

8:35 pm **Core Question TWO – 30 Minutes**

How are we “walking together” as a Church, and what steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?

Table Discussion

- By our deep listening today, what actions do you hear the Holy Spirit asking our parish and the universal Church to take?

PARISH

UNIVERSAL CHURCH

- What practical steps are needed to include people in the areas of leadership, governance, and inclusion in the universal Church?

9:05 **Local Questions – 10 Minutes**

How are we “walking together” as a Church, and what steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?

Table Discussion

- How can the Archdiocese of Newark support you in your local parish?

- What are three steps we can take in our Archdiocese to grow more collaboratively for the future?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The table scribe records key points of the conversations and all discern what are the key themes to present to the Holy Father through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (USCCB)

9:15pm **Feedback from a few groups**
Ask two or three groups to give a flavor of their discussions

9:20 pm **Evaluation of the Time spent together**

- How has this discussion given you the opportunity to listen and express and share your own experience of your parish and the universal Church?
- What is one hope you have for the Church as we continue to grow and listen to the Holy Spirit?

9:30 pm **Sending Prayer**
Leader Let us take a moment of quiet as we reflect on what we have done here today...

Reader A reading from the Letter of Saint James Jas 1:21-22
Dearest brothers and sisters:
Humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you...
[and] Be doers of the word and not hearers only.

Leader Come Holy Spirit,
we ask you, that by your inspiration,
all of our prayers and actions always begin from you
and inspire others to know you more deeply.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

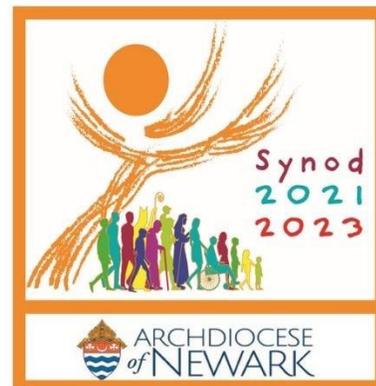
All Amen

Leader Let us go forth sharing a sign of peace.



PREPARING OUR HEARTS AND VOICES

As we prepare to enter into
this experience of Church
we invite you to prepare through
reflection and prayer.



For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

"The Synodal Process is first and foremost a spiritual process.
It is not a mechanical data-gathering exercise or a series of meetings and debates.
Synodal listening is oriented towards discernment."⁶
We are being invited to listen to the Holy Spirit in the voices of the faithful.

ATTITUDES TO CULTIVATE

Listening

We are called to listen humbly and to speak courageously; to listen in a manner that invites others to share authentically while we ourselves share our experiences and hopes with mercy and charity.

Newness and Conversion

We are invited to embrace the action of the Holy Spirit, particularly in the ways in which the Spirit inspires us to new views and new ways of being Church.

Allowing God to Lead

We are called to allow the Spirit to direct us. To set aside our own expectations so that we can listen more clearly to what God desires of us.

Focus on others

"The Synodal Process is an opportunity to open up, to look around us, to see things from other points of view, and to move out in missionary outreach to the peripheries".

LEAVE BEHIND

Self-centeredness

We need one another. When we set aside self-centeredness "we are able to learn from each other, journey together, and be at the service of one another."

Division and Discord

We are challenged to suspend our judgments and ideologies in order to enter into dialogue that promotes mutual understanding and unity.

Fear

"For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control." 2 Tim 1-7 We are reminded that change is a necessary part of growth and fear inhibits growth.

Self-doubt

The participation of each person is essential for the synodal process to achieve its objective. You are called by virtue of your Baptism, to listen to the Holy Spirit in your life and to share your experience of God and His Church for the good of all His people.

*Vatican Synod Handbook 2.2 - 2.4

REFLECT

In what ways do I hear God calling me to listen and embrace the thoughts, desires, struggles and hopes of others, especially those on the margins?

What do I need to leave behind in order to enter this process with an open heart, an open mind, and a willingness to share my experiences boldly and honestly?

In what ways is God inviting me to allow this experience to transform me and to strengthen my relationship with Him and with the Church?

PRAY

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.

We ask special blessings on the Church of Newark.

May we cherish this opportunity to pray, listen, and discern so that we
may continue the mission of Christ as missionary disciples.

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.

For more information visit <https://www.rcan.org/synod2023> or use the QR code

... "We recall that the purpose of the Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but "to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands" ...

