

XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS

Listening and Discernment Guide Session III



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”?

The three dimensions of the Synod are **Communion, Participation** and **Mission**.

These three dimensions are profoundly interrelated. They are the vital pillars of a Synodal Church.

There is no hierarchy between them. Rather, each one enriches and orients the other two.

MISSION

The Church exists to evangelise. We can never be centred on ourselves. Our mission is to witness the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. This Synodal Process has a deep missionary dimension to it. It is intended to enable the Church to better witness to the Gospel, especially with those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential peripheries of our world. In this way, synodality is a path by which the Church can more fruitfully fulfil her mission of evangelisation in the world, as a leaven at the service of the coming of God’s kingdom.

The three areas covered within this theme are:

- **Sharing responsibility for our common mission**
- **Dialogue in Church and society**
- **Ecumenism**



If you are working in a group of five or more, you may need to set aside 1.5 hours to use this guide appropriately.

At the beginning of this session, you are invited to pray together.

You might like to read Scripture, use the words written below or just speak to God from your heart.

Prayer for the Synod: *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*

**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.

Read and reflect on the following questions in silence. You may want to choose a few that speak to you the most.

Reflect on your personal experience of faith, life and the Church related to these questions.

Write a list of all the responses to these questions that come to mind.

Share aloud all of the responses you have written down, working together through Step 3.

1. 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?

2. 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?

3. 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?

ROUND 1: SHARING MY REFLECTION

- Speakers work in a clockwise direction. The facilitator may nominate someone to start, then participants can share one after the other.
- Everyone speaks for two to three minutes about what happened during their reflection time.
- Begin with the phrase: *“In my reflection today...”*
- When others are speaking, remember to listen with an open and humble heart. The focus is to listen to others, rather than simply thinking about what you want to say.
- Between each person, there will be a 30-second pause to recall what was said.
- At the end, the group pauses for a period of prayer. This may help to absorb what was said and to take a break before beginning the second round.

ROUND 2: GATHERING WHAT I HEARD

- This round will be shorter than the first. Speaking order is clockwise, as before.
- Everyone speaks for one to two minutes.
- This is an opportunity to answer questions like:
 - *What consoled me or struck me as I listened to my companions?*
 - *What did I hear? What did I feel? What was the Spirit saying to me/us?*
 - *Was I especially touched by a particular sharing?*
- Begin with the phrase, *“In the group I heard...and it left me feeling...”*.
- When everyone finishes, the group pauses for a period of prayer.

ROUND 3: MOVING FORWARD

- In this round, participants are not obliged to speak, and can speak spontaneously without any particular order.
- This is an opportunity to reflect on questions like:
 - *Is there a common thread in what was shared? Is there something missing that you had expected would be said?*
 - *Have you received any particular insight or revelation? What is it?*
 - *Where did you experience a sense of harmony with others as you shared with one another?*
 - *What are the feelings of the group? Is there consensus or disagreement?*
 - *What is the way forward?*
- The leader helps summarise the discussion.

At this stage, the group begins to realise what unites them. It is here that signs of the action of the Holy Spirit in the group begin to manifest themselves, and the conversation becomes an experience of shared discernment.

PRAY At the end of the Spiritual Conversation, you are invited to pray together. You can use the words below, or you might like to say a prayer of gratitude in your own words. You may also choose to close with the prayer for the Synod: *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*.

**Creator God, we thank you for the encounter with one another today.
We know that where two or three are gathered, you are in our midst.**

**Thank you for being with us and for the courage to speak boldly and
with passion, and the humility to listen with open hearts.**

**We ask you to continue to walk with us, as we discover the pathway
toward the future you are calling us to.**

Amen.

RESPOND Your voice is important as it conveys the main fruits of the discernment of the whole People of God across the world.

It is recommended that your group's response be captured in a short summary of no more than 250 words.

- The response should reflect the diversity of views and opinions expressed and pay particular attention to the lived experiences of participants, both positive and negative. It should be faithful to the people's voices and to whatever emerged from their discernment and dialogue, rather than a series of generalised or doctrinally correct statements.
- Views should not be excluded simply because they were expressed by a small minority of participants.
- Overall, the response should capture what the Holy Spirit has inspired the community to see regarding the current reality of synodality, including the present lights and shadows, and in what ways the Holy Spirit is inviting the community to grow in synodality.

Your response will become your submission to the Synod of Bishops and will be compiled and sent to your diocese. Please submit your response online between 20 October 2021 and 27 February 2022 at <https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch> via the **SUBMISSION** link.



Thank you for contributing to the discernment process
of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

*Guided by the Holy Spirit, we make up the living
stones through whom God builds up the Church
that He desires for the third millennium (1 Peter 2:5).*



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