

COMMUNION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE CHURCH

1. What do you understand by communion or participation in the Church?
2. How has the scandal of sex abuse in the Church affected you?
3. What is your experience of being in the Church?
4. What do you want the Church to be?
5. How do I experience my connection with the wider Church - the Pope and the universal Church, and with the Church in the Archdiocese?
6. How can we foster a sense of communion or participation?
7. What does my participation in the parish look like? What do I want it to look like?
8. How can we reach out to those who do not feel welcome in the Church or who seem to be no longer interested?
9. How can we support parents whose children no longer come to Church?
10. How can we support engaged and married couples to strengthen their relationship with God and each other?
11. How can we support family life?
12. How can we encourage vocations to the priesthood, religious life, permanent diaconate, nursing, medicine, education and public service?

MISSION

1. What part can I play in the Church's mission?
2. Am I comfortable talking about my faith with others? If not, what would make me more confident?
3. What can my parish do to deepen my commitment as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
4. How can we reach out to victims of abuse and their families?
5. What does my parish need to become an evangelising community?
6. How do I respond to those needs in my present situation?
7. How can our parish be a light for our local community?

EXCERPTS FROM THE VATICAN GUIDE TO THE SYNOD

... It is clear that the purpose of this Synod is not to produce more documents. Rather, it is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission. Thus the objective of this Synodal Process is not only a series of exercises that start and stop, but rather a journey of growing authentically towards the communion and mission that God calls the Church to live out in the third millennium.

The ultimate perspective to orient this synodal path of the Church is to serve the dialogue of God with humanity and to journey together to the kingdom of God

For this reason, while all the baptized are specifically called to take part in the Synodal Process, no one – no matter their religious affiliation – should be excluded from sharing their perspective and experiences, insofar as they want to help the Church on her synodal journey of seeking what is good and true. This is especially true of those who are most vulnerable or marginalized.

Listening is the method. Discerning is the aim.

As on any journey, we need to be aware of possible pitfalls that could hamper our progress during this time of synodality. The following are several pitfalls that must be avoided in order to promote the vitality and fruitfulness of the Synodal Process.

1)The temptation of wanting to lead ourselves instead of being led by God. Synodality is not a corporate strategic exercise. Rather it is a spiritual process that is led by the Holy Spirit. We can be tempted to forget that we are pilgrims and servants on the path marked out for us by God. Our humble efforts of organization and coordination are at the service of God who guides us on our way. We are clay in the hands of the divine Potter (Isaiah 64:8).

2)The temptation to focus on ourselves and our immediate concerns. 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. This requires us to think long-term. This also means broadening our

perspectives to the dimensions of the entire Church and asking questions, such as: What is God's plan for the Church here and now? How can we implement God's dream for the Church on the local level?

3)The temptation to only see "problems." The challenges, difficulties, and hardships facing our world and our Church are many. Nevertheless, fixating on the problems will only lead us to be overwhelmed, discouraged, and cynical. We can miss the light if we focus only on the darkness. Instead of focusing only on what is not going well, let us appreciate where the Holy Spirit is generating life and see how we can let God work more fully.

4)The temptation of focusing only on structures. The Synodal Process will naturally call for a renewal of structures at various levels of the Church, in order to foster deeper communion, fuller participation, and more fruitful mission. At the same time, the experience of Synodality should not focus first and foremost on structures, but on the experience of journeying together to discerning the path forward, inspired by the Holy Spirit. The conversion and renewal of structures will come about only through the on-going conversion and renewal of all the members of the Body of Christ.

5)The temptation not to look beyond the visible confines of the Church. In expressing the Gospel in our lives, lay women and men act as a leaven in the world in which we live and work. A Synodal Process is a time to dialogue with people from the worlds of economics and science, politics and culture, arts and sport, the media and social initiatives. It will be a time to reflect on ecology and peace, life issues and migration. We must keep the bigger picture in view to fulfil our mission in the world. It is also an opportunity to deepen the ecumenical journey with other Christian denominations and to deepen our understanding with other faith traditions.

6)The temptation to lose focus of the objectives of the Synodal Process. As we proceed along the journey of the Synod, we need to be careful that, while our discussions might be wide-ranging, the Synodal Process maintains the goal of discerning how God calls us to walk forward together. No one Synodal Process is going to resolve all our concerns and problems. Synodality is an attitude and an approach of moving forward in a co-responsible way that is open to welcoming God's fruits together over time.

7)The temptation of conflict and division. "That they may all be one" (John 17:21). This is the ardent prayer of Jesus to the Father, asking for unity among

his disciples. The Holy Spirit leads us deeper into communion with God and one another. The seeds of division bear no fruit. It is vain to try to impose one's ideas on the whole Body through pressure or to discredit those who feel differently.

8)The temptation to treat the Synod as a kind of a parliament. This confuses synodality with a 'political battle' in which in order to govern one side must defeat the other. It is contrary to the spirit of synodality to antagonize others or to encourage divisive conflicts that threaten the unity and communion of the Church.

9)The temptation to listen only to those who are already involved in Church activities. This approach may be easier to manage, but it ultimately ignores a significant proportion of the People of God....the diocesan phase should begin by finding the most effective ways of achieving the widest participation possible. We must personally reach out to the peripheries, to those who have left the Church, those who rarely or never practice their faith, those who experience poverty or marginalization, refugees, the excluded, the voiceless, etc

The heart of the synodal experience is listening to God through listening to one another, inspired by the Word of God. We listen to each other in order to better hear the voice of Holy Spirit speaking in our world today. This can take place over the course of one gathering, but we strongly encourage that several gatherings take place to allow for a more interactive atmosphere of sharing as people get to know each other, trust one another, and feel that they can speak more freely thus making it a truly synodal experience of journeying together. In addition to the more formal aspects of speaking and listening to one another, it is important that gatherings have informal moments as well. Pilgrimages, group activities, artistic expressions, and even coffee breaks can help to foster a sense of community through the experience of sharing life with one another

Individuals can also contribute their consultation feedback directly to the diocese