

What is Synodality? Background for the Synod:

- Following in the wake of the renewal of the Church proposed by the Second Vatican Council, this common journey together is a gift and a task.
- Root local experience of the Synod process in meditation on Scripture, the liturgy, and Prayer.
- Our journey together can be authentic in discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit.
- Synodality represents a path by which the Church can be renewed by the action of the Holy Spirit, listening to what God has to say to his people.
- We will be able to discern together pathways to which God calls us – to a deeper communion, fuller participation, and greater openness in fulfilling our mission in the world.
- Synod - indicates a path along which the People of God walk together and equally that the Lord Jesus, who presents Himself as ‘the way, the truth and the life’ (jn 14,6) His followers were called ‘followers of the Way’
- Synodality – qualifies the life and mission of the Church – People journeying together and gathering in assembly, summoned by the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit to proclaimed the gospel. Expressed in the Church’s ordinary way of living and working.
- All the People of God share in a common dignity and vocation through Baptism.
- Called to be active participants in the Church.
- Invited to listen to one another in order to hear the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- Strive to ground ourselves in experiences of authentic listening and discernment on the path of becoming the Church that God calls us to be.

What is the Aim / Objective of the Synodal Process:

- Synodality not so much an event or slogan but a style and way of being – how the Church lives out mission in the world.
- Requires the entire People of God to be on a journey together. Each member playing a crucial role united together.
- Not only an assembly of bishops but a journey for all the faithful.
- Reinvigorate all baptized, both hierarchy and laity, called to be active participants in the saving mission of the Church (LG, 32-33)

- Faithful have received Holy Spirit in baptism and confirmation and called to utilize the gifts and charisms for the renewal as members of the Body of Christ. A living voice of the People of God.
- Guided by fundamental question: **How does this “journeying together” take place today on different levels (from local to universal, allowing the Church to proclaim the Gospel? And what steps is the Spirit inviting us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?**
- Objective - to listen, as the entire People of God, to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church.
- How – by listening together to the Word of God in Scripture and the living Tradition of the Church, and then by listening to one another, especially those at the margins, discerning the signs of the times.
- Not to produce more documents, rather, intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people’s hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, bind up wounds, weave new and deeper relationships, learn from one another, build bridges, enlighten minds, warm hearts, restore strength to our hands for common mission (PD, 32)

The theme of this Synod, For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission

Direct invitation by Pope Francis to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops in October 2015.

Addressed to the entire People of God.

“every one of the baptized should feel involved in the ecclesial and social change that we so greatly need. This change calls for a personal and communal conversion that makes us see things as the Lord does.”

Begin October 2021 in each local Church and complete in October 2023 in the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

Key words: **Communion**, love and unity of the Trinity. Christ reconciles us to the Father and unites us with each other in the Holy Spirit. Together, we are inspired by listening to the Word of God, through the living Tradition of the Church. We all play a role in discerning and living out God’s call for his people. **Participation**, involvement from all who belong to the People of God – laity, consecrated and ordained. Engage in deep and respectful listening to one another. The listening creates a space for us to hear the Holy Spirit together. Based on that all the faithful are qualified and are called to serve one another through the gifts they have each received from the Holy Spirit. **Mission**, Church exists to evangelize. We can never be centered on ourselves. Witness to the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. Be the leaven.

Experience at the local level:

- Following opening session on October 9, 2021 in Rome.
- Diocesan phase will begin October 17, 2021.
- Local listening phase.
- Ideas following listening to be gathered by April 2022.
- All ideas to be synthesized and provided to the Synod of Bishops.
- Assembly of the Synod of Bishops then held in October 2023.

Each listening phase will be adapted to the local circumstances.

Encouraged to focus on maximum inclusion and participation, reaching out to involve the greatest number of people possible. Especially those on the periphery who are often excluded and forgotten.

Widest participation – Just as Jesus reached out to all. No one excluded from God’s plan of salvation.

****God is truly at work within the entire people that he has gathered together. Special care to include those who may be excluded or at risk such as: women, handicapped, refugees, migrants, elderly, people in poverty, non-practicing Catholics, children and youth. No one should be excluded from sharing in the journey in seeking what is good and true.**

A process that is truly Synodal; Listening, Discernment, and Participation

First a Spiritual process.

Personal and communal discernment.

Not a onetime exercise, but a way of life.

Praying, reflecting, paying attention to one another’s inner disposition, listening, talking in authentic, meaningful and welcoming ways.

Discernment – art of interpreting the direction the heart leads us – allowing reflection and engagement of heart and head in making decisions to seek and find the will of God.

Involve others who hold different views than us. Diverse opinions.

Attitudes for Participation in the Synodal Process:

- Allow time for sharing.
- Humility in listening and courage to speak
- Dialogue leads us to newness
- Openness to conversion and change
- Synods are an ecclesial exercise in discernment
- Signs of a Church that listens and journeys
- Leave behind prejudice and stereotypes
- Overcome scourge of clericalism
- Cure the virus of self-sufficiency
- Overcome ideologies
- Give rise to hope
- Time to dream and spend time with the future.(innovation, inclusive, open mind, listen to each and every one, understand journeying together, co-responsible Church, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue)

Avoid Pitfalls:

Temptation to

- lead ourselves instead of being led by God
- focus on ourselves and our immediate concerns
- only see “problems”
- focus only on structure
- not to look beyond the visible confines of the Church
- lose focus on objectives of Synodal process
- have conflict and division
- treat Synod as a kind of parliament.
- Only listen to those involved in Church activities already