Synod 21-23

For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

친 교 | 참 여 | 사 명

comunión | participación | misión

Parish and Community Toolkit

Facilitator Guides & Resources

synod.lacatholics.org

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LA Catholics

Together as Church

A Guide for Listening Sessions

in preparation for the 2023 World Synod of Bishops

Archdiocese of Los Angeles

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Introduction

On October 10, 2021, His Holiness Pope Francis opened a worldwide synod process with a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. In the language of the Church, a synod is an assembly, principally of bishops, that gathers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discuss and decide on matters in the Church's life and mission. The biblical foundation of synods can be found in the Acts of the Apostles: Peter and about one hundred and twenty disciples gathered to discern and choose a successor for Judas (Acts 1:15-26), and the Apostles and presbyters assembled in Jerusalem to decide on whether some provisions of the law of Moses apply to Gentiles (Acts 15:1-29).

In 1965, Pope St. Paul VI established the Synod of Bishops as a consultative body of bishops that gathers at regular intervals to advise the Pope, the Bishop of Rome. The themes of recent assemblies of the Synod of Bishops have included the New Evangelization (2012), the family (2015), and young people (2018).

The theme for the synod underway is "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission." This synod is unique because the Holy Father has summoned the whole Church to participate in a three-year process.

The Greek word *synodos* is a fusion of two words: *syn*, meaning "together," and *hodos*, meaning "road," which basically translates as "on the road together." Synodality is a style or mode of being Church, in which we journey together, both clergy and laity, each according to our roles and spiritual gifts.

Q: What is a synodal Church?

A: "A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening "is more than simply hearing". It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of truth"

-Pope Francis, Address commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops

Archbishop José H. Gomez opened the diocesan phase of the synod in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles with a Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels on October 31, 2021. During this phase of the synod, listening sessions will occur in parishes and communities throughout our local Church. Reports from listening sessions will be submitted online to the Archdiocese. Next, teams in each of the five pastoral regions of the Archdiocese will synthesize the reports from the sessions hosted in their respective regions. Then an Archdiocesan team will synthesize the regional reports in one report to be submitted to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

This diocesan phase of the synod will close with a Mass at the cathedral on the Solemnity of Pentecost on Sunday, June 5, 2022. A continental phase of the synod will follow the diocesan phase, with North America represented by the United States and Canada. Finally, the synod process will culminate with an assembly of bishops in Rome in October 2023.

In the face of global crises, the synod offers the Church a moment of grace by which to pray and reflect on a synodal way forward in her life and mission. This synod process will unfold amid the "Forward in Mission" Jubilee Year in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, celebrating 250 years of Catholic faith. Participation in the synod can be a source of renewal in our parishes and communities as we aim to raise up a new generation of missionary disciples of Jesus Christ for our time.

Getting Started with the Toolkit

1. Choose the appropriate listening session format for your community (p. 9-11) and promote the scheduled date(s) using the sample announcements for bulletins, websites, emails, and pulpit announcements (p. 8). Review the demographic information included in the parish/community report (p. 59-60) and determine how and when you can collect the information.

2. Identify facilitator(s), note takers, and hospitality team members (p. 7) and provide them with the appropriate guides from this toolkit. For your convenience, copies of the *Note Taker Instructions and Summary Form* can be printed/downloaded from synod.lacatholics.org/resources. Additional note takers may need to be identified on the day of the listening session.

3. Identify *Parish/Community Reporter(s)* (p. 7) and determine how they will receive listening session summary forms. Provide them with the *Parish/Community Synthesis Report Instructions* (p. 57-58).

4. Host listening session(s) and provide *Note Taker Summary Forms* to reporter(s). Submit parish/community report at synod.lacatholics.org/submit by **Friday, April 8, 2022**. Share the parish/community report at your local level.

5. Invite members of your parish/community to participate in the Archdiocesan closing Mass on Pentecost (June 5, 2022) and/or celebrate the closing of the Archdiocesan Synod process locally in your community.

Preparation for Listening Sessions

Christian faith is a journey toward the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit. Along the way, we walk side-by-side in the Church. Each synod listening session will provide participants an opportunity to reflect on our journey together in Christ. In order to support this experience, individuals will need to be identified to serve in the roles of **facilitator, note taker, hospitality team members** and **parish/ community reporter.**

Facilitators

Listening sessions will form the beating heart of the synod process. Facilitators will play a major role in these listening sessions, leading prayer and guiding discussions in a spirit of openness and charity.

Facilitators can join virtual training sessions in mid-January, and later, access videos of them on the Synod website (synod.lacatholics.org/training).The facilitator will work with the reporter, who will compile, synthesize, and submit an online report on behalf of the parish or community. The facilitator is the host of each listening session and will promote an atmosphere of friendship and fraternity by modeling an attitude of hospitality so that all participants feel welcome.

The words “synod” and “synodality” are unfamiliar to most Catholics. Therefore, using the resources in this toolkit, the facilitator will explain what a synod is and what synodality means, why this particular synod is unique, and why participation in this process matters. Next, the facilitator will lead participants in the Synod Prayer invoking the Holy Spirit and will guide small-group reflection on the Gospel. Then, the facilitator will explain the aim of the listening session and present shared norms for the dialogue to follow. The small-group discussions will focus on how we have and have not journeyed together as a Church in the past, as well as how we can journey together more closely in the future.

The facilitator will clearly explain the nature of the process: we gather to pray, to reflect, and to dialogue together. This process of listening and engaging does not seek to change any teachings of the Church. Rather, a listening session is an exercise in synodality — “journeying together.” Part of journeying together is a willingness to listen to and learn from each other. We may not agree on every matter, but with humility, sensitivity, and above all charity, we will listen to the experiences of others.

Because the discussions will perhaps touch on difficult issues, the facilitator will model and encourage respectful, non-judgmental listening and speaking as concrete expressions of charity. The Leadership Roundtable *Process for Facilitating Synodal Consultations* includes a helpful resource in "Appendix 1: Facilitating Potentially Difficult Synodal Consultations" and is included in the appendix of this toolkit.

Following the small-group discussions, the facilitator will open the discussion to the full assembly, encouraging participants in thanksgiving to share graces received and insights gained from the experience. Finally, the facilitator will close with a prayer.

Note Takers

As much as possible, identify note takers in advance of the listening session, at least one per six participants and provide them with instructions from this toolkit (p. 53). Employ hospitality team members for this role when appropriate. Have printed/digital copies of the instructions and forms available for note takers identified on the day of the listening session.

Parish/Community Reporter(s)

Provide the reporter(s) with the instructions from this toolkit (p. 57-63). The facilitator can assist the reporter in compiling and synthesizing reports from the small groups. One report will be submitted per listening parish/community. For additional guidance and specific questions, please contact the Synod Steering Committee (synod@la-archdiocese.org).

Hospitality Team

In addition to supporting the logistics of the event by setting up the in-person or virtual space, these volunteers provide a warm welcome to all participants. Christian hospitality, in fact, treats everyone as Jesus himself: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35). The listening sessions are an opportunity to engage anew with those who do not participate in parish life beyond Sunday Mass or have been away from the Church. This team should be on the lookout for unfamiliar faces and enthusiastically greet new people, offering support and reassurance as needed. These volunteers would also be appropriate to serve in the role of note taker during the sessions.

Announcements for Bulletin/Website/Email/Pulpit Announcements

The Holy Father Pope Francis has summoned the Church to participate in a worldwide synod with the theme: "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission." Instead of an assembly of bishops in Rome only, Pope Francis invites the whole People of God to participate in the synod—to "journey together" with our brothers and sisters in Christ along the path of renewal, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Everyone is invited to join us on (day of the week, date) from (time) for a synod listening session. We encourage all to participate: young adults and seniors, active parishioners and those who have drifted away, as well as those who feel marginalized from the Church. We will pray and reflect together on where we are as a Church and how the Holy Spirit is calling us to move forward.

Universal Prayer (Prayers of the Faithful)

- For a spirituality of journeying together. That we may be formed as disciples of Christ, as families, as communities, and as human beings, through our experience of this Synodal journey. We pray to the Lord.
- For true dialogue in the Church and in Society. That through a path of perseverance, patience, and mutual understanding, we may be attentive to the experience of persons and peoples. We pray to the Lord.
- For the unity of Christians. That dialogue between Christians of different denominations, united by one Baptism, may radiate with new brightness on this Synodal journey. We pray to the Lord.
- For our discernment to be led by the Holy Spirit. That all decisions made on this Synodal path may be discerned through a consensus that flows from our common obedience to the Holy Spirit. We pray to the Lord.
- For a Church that celebrates. That our journey together in the coming months will be based on listening together to the Word of God and the celebration of the Eucharist in the communion of the People of God. We pray to the Lord.

Additional petitions and translations are available at synod.lacatholics.org/resources

Preparation for the Listening Session: Day of the Event

- Prepare small-group seating with six chairs around tables or in circles of six.
- Provide each note taker a copy of the *Note Taker SummaryReport Form* and a writing utensil.
- A screen and projector can be set up to project the PowerPoint provided in the *Parish Toolkit* (synod.lacatholics.org/resources).
- Provide print/digital handouts of the Synod Prayer, Gospel reflection reading and process, and small-group discussion questions in the *Participant Guide*. synod.lacatholics.org/participant). QR codes are also available to direct participants to digital handouts.
- Provide print/digital form for participants to provide demographic information.
- Review *Guidance for Possible Disclosures of Sexual Abuse During ADLA Synod Listening Sessions* (p. 68) with Facilitators and Note Takers

Overview of Listening Session Formats

Series of Three Listening Sessions

- Duration: 1 hr. 55 min. - 2 hrs. 15 min.
- Suggested time: weekday evenings or Saturday mornings
- Recommended schedule:

Session 1: Communion	
Welcome, Overview of the Synod and Synodality, Synod Prayer, and Small Group Introductions	10 minutes
Gospel Reflection Process	20 minutes
Small-Group Discussion: Speaking and Listening	35 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Small-Group Discussion: Celebrating	30 minutes
Full Assembly Thanksgiving and Closing Prayer	20 minutes

Session 2: Mission	
Welcome, Overview of the Synod and Synodality, Synod Prayer, and Small Group Introductions	10 minutes
Gospel Reflection Process	15 minutes
Small-Group Discussion: Going on Mission	35 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Small-Group Discussion: Dialoguing	30 minutes
Full Assembly Thanksgiving and Closing Prayer	20 minutes

Session 3: Participation	
Welcome, Overview of the Synod and Synodality, Synod Prayer, and Small Group Introductions	10 minutes
Gospel Reflection Process	15 minutes
Small-Group Discussion: Discerning and Deciding	35 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Small-Group Discussion: Growing in Synodality	30 minutes
Full Assembly Thanksgiving and Closing Prayer	20 minutes

Possible Variation:

- 6 sessions with longer discussions on each theme

1-Day Listening Session

- Duration: 2 hrs. - 2 hrs. 15 min.
- Suggested time: weekday evening or Saturday morning
- Recommended schedule:

Welcome, Synod Prayer, Overview of the Synod and Synodality and Small Group Introductions	10-15 minutes
Gospel Reflection Process	20 minutes
Small-Group Discussion 1: "Our Journey Together Now"	35 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Small-Group Discussion 2: "Journeying Together in the Future"	30 minutes
Full Assembly Thanksgiving and Closing Prayer	20-25 minutes

Possible Variation:

- 3-hour session with longer discussions on the two questions

Adaptations

The processes described in the following pages provide instruction for in-person listening sessions. Possible adaptations may include:

Virtual Sessions

(all participants gather via videoconference)

- Use a service or account that can support the appropriate number of participants and length of time required for each session.
- Assigning at least one individual to serve as "tech coordinator" to attend to technological needs and information gathering processes is recommended.
- Do not record in order to encourage open sharing among participants.
- In gatherings of more than eight participants, it will be necessary to employ breakout rooms to provide sufficient time for each person to participate.

Virtual Sessions (cont.)

- In order to gather demographic information about the participants, consider one of the following options:
  - Employ a poll during the live session.
  - Provide a link to an online survey to all participants to complete during the session.
- Admitting new participants after the *Gospel Reflection* portion of the listening session is not recommended.

Hybrid Sessions

(some participants gather in-person and some virtually at the same time)

- This option is ***not recommended*** unless the parish or community has prior experience hosting hybrid meetings.
- Designating an in-person volunteer to host the online participants, monitor sound, screen share, and synchronize with in-person activity is required.

Ecumenical Gatherings

- Christians from other traditions or denominations are welcome to participate in listening sessions. Parishes/communities are encouraged to dedicate one session as an ecumenical listening session.
- They will share their experience of the Catholic Church in the small-group discussions.

Session 1: Communion

Participant Arrival

The hospitality team will welcome participants as they arrive, answer questions, and direct participants to be seated in small groups.

If note takers have not been determined prior to the session or additional are needed, identify and invite individuals as they arrive to serve in the role, enough for each small group of six.

Welcome and Overview of the Synod and Synodality

Start Time:

recommended time: 10 minutes

In these or similar words, the facilitator welcomes participants:

> **Welcome! Thank you for joining us for this first in a series of three listening sessions of the Synod in this parish (or community). I am N., and I will be the facilitator of this process.**

The facilitator can also invite those who will play a special role in the listening session to stand and be introduced. In these or similar words, the facilitator provides an overview of the synod and synodality:

In October 2021, His Holiness Pope Francis opened a worldwide synod process. In the language of the Church, a *synod* is an assembly, principally of bishops, that gathers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discuss and decide on matters in the Church's life and mission.

The theme for the synod underway is "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission." This synod is also unique because the Holy Father has summoned the whole Church to participate in a three-year process, culminating with an assembly of bishops in Rome in 2023.

The Greek word *synodos* is a fusion of two words: *syn*, meaning "together," and *hodos*, meaning "road," which can basically translate as "on the road together." Synodality is a style or mode of being Church, in which we journey together, both clergy and laity, each according to our roles and spiritual gifts. If we engage this process in a spirit of synodality, we can deepen our communion with God and each other, model participation in and co-responsibility for the life of the Church, and go forth together on our mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

Pope Francis' stated aim of the synod of bishops in 2018 can well be applied to this synod, too. The intention of this process is "to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make 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."

In the face of global crises, the synod offers the Church a moment of grace bringing healing and hope. Archbishop José Gomez invites the Church in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to walk together in this synod process of prayer, reflection, and dialogue. During this "Forward in Mission" Jubilee Year celebrating 250 years of Catholic faith in the Archdiocese, the synod can be a source of renewal for our local Church as we seek to raise up a new generation of missionary disciples of Jesus Christ for our time.

Synod Prayer

The facilitator leads the participants in the Synod Prayer or invites the pastor to do so. The text of the prayer can be projected on a screen or provided as a handout.

The Holy Spirit has gathered us here in the name of Jesus. We pause for a moment to recognize that God is indeed with us.

Following a brief moment of silence, the facilitator begins the prayer.

With confidence in the presence and power of the Spirit, we 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.
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.

Overview of the Listening Session

In these or similar words, the facilitator provides an overview of the listening session:

This synod listening session presents an invitation to listen deeply to one another and to discern how God is calling us to journey together more closely as his Church. The aim of this listening session is simply to be present to the Holy Spirit and to one another, to listen to and to learn from each other, and above all, to grow closer to Jesus Christ and his Church.

During this session, we will listen to and reflect on the Word of God and then will share in small groups on two main themes. There will be a break between each discussion and we will conclude by sharing about our time together with the full assembly.

Following our session today and any other listening sessions hosted by our (parish/community), a synthesis will be assembled of the feedback shared. Our report can also benefit this community as a foundation

for ongoing discussion and planning for the future. The feedback will be utilized by a team tasked with creating a similar synthesis report for all parishes and communities for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Any participants not yet seated in small groups will be invited to join a group.

The facilitator then invites the participants to introduce themselves within their small groups.

We are sisters and brothers in Christ, which means there can be no stranger among us. To begin our sharing, I invite each member of your group to introduce himself or herself by

- **teaching the group how to pronounce your name**
- **and by sharing something about any part of your name (first, middle, last, nickname) that tells us something about you.**

For example, my name is pronounced N. and…

The facilitator allows a few moments for small-group introductions.

Gospel Reflection

Start Time:

recommended time: 20 minutes

Together, we will now reflect on a Gospel passage from the Scriptures in our small groups. The Word of God is living and effective, speaking to each of us personally today. As you listen to the reading, ask yourself in silence: "Lord, what are you saying to me?"

Listen for a word or phrase that calls your attention or touches your heart.

Hold on to that word or phrase for sharing.

The facilitator pauses.

Once again, we call on the Holy Spirit: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."

The facilitator slowly and clearly reads the passage or invites someone else to do so. The reading is included in the Listening Session Presentation Slides and may be projected and/or print/digital copies may be distributed while reading aloud.

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.
That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?"

And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, " The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive.

Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures.

As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

The facilitator pauses to allow time for silent reflection.

In your small groups, I now invite you to share the word or phrase that you chose and why it stood out to you. If you feel comfortable, share a brief story or experience of how the word or phrase connects to your life at this moment. As you share, center on your personal experiences rather than teaching or preaching at this time.

The facilitator allows time for small-group sharing.

Thank you for sharing how God is speaking to you through his Word. In response to what we have heard in the Word and from each other, I invite you to ask yourself in silence, "Lord, what are you asking me to do?" Pray for the grace to do what Jesus asks.

The facilitator pauses to allow time for silent prayer.

Amen.

Shared Norms for Dialogue

Start Time:

recommended time: 35 minutes

In preparation for the small-group discussion, the facilitator provides a common understanding of how to participate in the activities to follow.

We, like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, walk together with Jesus on the road of life. This listening session is a time to share with one another the things that have taken place on our journey of faith and where Jesus is calling us to go together.

The facilitator will refer participants to the "Shared Norms for Dialogue" also included in the Participant Guide.

We gather to pray, reflect, and dialogue. This process of listening and engaging does not seek to change any teachings of the Church. Rather, a listening session is an exercise in synodality—"journeying together." Part of journeying together is a willingness to listen to and learn from each other. We may not agree on every matter, but with humility, sensitivity, and charity, we will listen to the experiences of others.

Dialogue requires the courage both to listen and to speak. Above all, dialogue requires respect. We acknowledge each person here as a brother or sister in Christ, whom Jesus loves and for whom he died.

SESSION 1

Slide Available

Participant Guide

Therefore, as we engage in this listening session, we will:

- **speak clearly, one person at a time, without interruption,**
- **listen for understanding, with an open mind and without judgment,**
- **display attentive posture, conscious of body language and facial expressions,**
- **be sensitive to differences in communication styles,**
- **limit how long we speak so everyone has time to share,**
- **and speak only once until everyone else has had a chance to share.**

In summary, we will treat each other with reverence and listen to each other with respect—we will be listening for the Holy Spirit among us!

In these or similar words, the facilitator introduces the first theme for discussion:

Our small-group discussions today will focus on themes related to Communion. For the next 30 minutes, we will discuss a series of questions on Listening and Speaking. You will find the discussion questions listed in your Participant Guide as well as a list of helpful terms for your reference.

One member of the group has been designated to take notes and fill out a Summary Form. During the last five minutes of your discussion, your note taker will lead you in creating a summary for the group.

At the end of this session, an appointed reporter will compile and synthesize the small-group reports and submit one report to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles for this parish (or community). The Archdiocese will then submit one report to the United States Conference of Catholics Bishops for use in the next phase of the synod.

In the questions, "Church" can mean the Archdiocese of Los Angeles or our parish (or community, apostolate, or group).

The small-group discussion questions can be projected on a screen or distributed to each participant.

Session 1, Discussion A: "Listening and Speaking"

- **Who is and who is not walking together with Jesus Christ in the Church today?**
- **In recent years, how has our Church "journeyed together" by providing opportunities for people to be heard?**
- **In recent years, how have we ignored or even excluded the voices of people on the margins of society and the sidelines of the Church?**
- **What keeps us from speaking with courage and charity on what matters to us for the life of the Church?**
- **How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to "journey together" more fully <u>through intentional listening and speaking to one another</u> in the coming years?**

As you think of possibilities, perhaps pay attention to the ideas that give you clarity, enthusiasm, peace, and hope (these may be an indication of the promptings of the Spirit).

The facilitator indicates when five minutes remain in the discussion time. Each small group will summarize the main points of Discussion A, which the group note taker will write in the Summary Form provided.

Break

Start Time:

recommended time: 10 minutes

At the end of the 30-minute discussion, the facilitator invites the participants to take a 10-minute break. Following the break, the facilitator introduces the second theme.

Session 1, Discussion B: "Celebrating"

Start Time:

recommended time: 30 minutes

For the next 30 minutes, we will discuss a series of questions on <u>Celebrating</u>.

Participant Guide

Slide Available

- **In recent years, how have experiences of prayer and the celebration of the liturgy (Mass and the sacraments) deepened our communion with God and with each other?**
- **In recent years, how have experiences of prayer and the celebration of the liturgy (Mass and the sacraments) guided our common life and mission?**
- **How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to "journey together" more fully <u>through a richer celebration of the liturgy</u> in the years to come?**
- **How might the Holy Spirit be inviting us <u>to promote Sunday Mass attendance and active participation in the celebration of the liturgy</u>?**

As you think of possibilities, perhaps pay attention to the ideas that give you clarity, enthusiasm, peace, and hope (these may be an indication of the promptings of the Spirit).

The facilitator indicates when five minutes remain in the discussion time. Each small group will summarize the main points of Discussion B, which the group note taker will write in the Summary Form provided.

Full Assembly Thanksgiving and Closing Prayer

Start Time:

recommended time: 20 minutes

In these or similar words, the facilitator invites the full assembly to share in thanksgiving their experience of the listening session.

In the past two hours we have shared rich experiences of faith. We have discussed how we have journeyed together in recent times and how we can journey more closely together in the years to come.
In thanksgiving for the gift of this time together, I invite you to think of a specific grace you received or insight you gained from this experience.

The facilitator allows a brief moment for participants to reflect.

I now invite anyone to share with the full assembly the grace received or insight gained.

The facilitator allows time for participants to share with the full assembly.

Thank you for sharing with us.
We will now close with prayer.

The facilitator says the closing prayer or invites the pastor to do so.

Lord Jesus,
We give you thanks and praise for gathering us here today
and for speaking to us.
Give us the grace to live in communion with you and with each other,
to participate in the life of your Church,
and to advance your mission in the world.
May all we say and do be guided by your Spirit,
and may this Synod bear much fruit in your Church.
We ask this in your most holy name.
Amen.

In these or similar words, the facilitator concludes with words of thanks for participation in the listening session:

Thank you all for your participation in this listening session. As this synod process continues to unfold, we look forward to renewal in the Spirit in our parish/community and Archdiocese.

(We look forward to seeing you next time, on…).

God bless you and your families.

Session 2: Mission

Participant Arrival

The hospitality team will welcome participants as they arrive, answer questions, and direct participants to be seated in small groups.

If note takers have not been determined prior to the session or additional are needed, identify and invite individuals as they arrive to serve in the role, enough for each small group of six.

Welcome and Overview of Synodality

Start Time:

recommended time: 10 minutes

Upon arrival, participants can sit in small groups of no more than six.
In these or similar words, the facilitator welcomes participants:

> **Welcome! Thank you for joining us for this second in a series of three listening sessions of the Synod in this parish (or community). I am N., and I will be the facilitator of this process.**

The facilitator can also invite those who will play a special role in the listening session to stand and be introduced.

In these or similar words, the facilitator provides an overview of synodality and the aim of the synod process:

As a recap for those who joined us last time and as an introduction for those joining us for the first time: In October 2021, His Holiness Pope Francis opened a worldwide synod process. In the language of the Church, a synod is an assembly, principally of bishops, that gathers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discuss and decide on matters in the Church's life and mission.

The theme for the synod underway is "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission."

This synod is unique because the Holy Father has summoned the whole Church to participate in a three-year process, culminating with an assembly of bishops in Rome in 2023.

The Greek word *synodos* is a fusion of two words: *syn*, meaning "together," and *hodos*, meaning "road," which can basically translate as "on the road together." Synodality is a style or mode of being Church, in which we journey together, both clergy and laity, each according to our roles and spiritual gifts. If we engage this process with an attitude of synodality, we can strengthen the bonds of communion with God and between us, model participation in and co-responsibility for the life of the Church, and go forth together on the mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

Opening Prayer

The facilitator leads the participants in the Synod prayer or invites the pastor to do so. The text of the prayer can be projected on a screen or distributed as a handout.

The Holy Spirit again has gathered us here in the name of Jesus. We pause for a moment to recognize that God is indeed with us.

Following a brief moment of silence, the facilitator begins the prayer.

With confidence in the presence and power of the Spirit, we 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.

**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.**

Overview of Listening Session

In these or similar words, the facilitator provides an overview of the listening session:

Once again, this synod listening session presents an invitation to listen deeply to one another and to discern how God is calling us to journey together more closely as his Church. The aim of this listening session is simply to be present to the Holy Spirit and to one another, to listen to and to learn from each other, and above all, to grow closer to Jesus Christ and his Church.

During this session, we will listen to and reflect on the Word of God and then will share in small groups on two main themes. There will be a break between each discussion and we will conclude by sharing about our time together with the full assembly.

Following our session today and any other listening sessions hosted by our (parish/community), a synthesis will be assembled of the feedback shared. Our report can also benefit this community as a foundation for ongoing discussion and planning for the future. The feedback will be utilized by a team tasked with creating a similar synthesis report for all parishes and communities for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

*Any participants not yet seated in small groups will be invited to join a group.
The facilitator then invites the participants to introduce themselves within their small groups.*

We are sisters and brothers in Christ, which means there can be no stranger among us. To begin our sharing, I invite each member of your group to introduce himself or herself by

- **teaching the group how to pronounce your name**

- **and by sharing something about any part of your name (first, middle, last, nickname) that tells us something about you.**

For example, my name is pronounced N. and…

The facilitator allows a few moments for small-group introductions.

Gospel Reflection

Start Time:

recommended time: 15 minutes

Together, we will now reflect on a Gospel passage from the Scriptures in our small groups. The Word of God is living and effective, speaking to each of us personally today. As you listen to the reading, ask yourself in silence: "Lord, what are you saying to me?"

Listen for a word or phrase that calls your attention or touches your heart.

Hold on to that word or phrase for sharing.

The facilitator pauses.

Once again, we call on the Holy Spirit: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."

The reading is included in the Listening Session Presentation Slides and may be projected while reading aloud and/or print/digital copies may be distributed while reading aloud.

The facilitator slowly and clearly reads the passage or invites someone else to do so.

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they all saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

The facilitator pauses to allow time for silent reflection.

In your small groups, I now invite you to share the word or phrase that you chose and why it stood out to you. If you feel comfortable, share a brief story or experience of how the word or phrase connects to your life at this moment. As you share, center on your personal experiences rather than teaching or preaching at this time.

The facilitator allows time for small-group sharing.

Thank you for sharing how God is speaking to you through his Word. In response to what we have heard in the Word and from each other, I invite you to ask yourself in silence, "Lord, what are you asking me to do?" Pray for the grace to do what Jesus asks.

The facilitator pauses to allow time for silent prayer.

Amen.

Shared Norms for Dialogue

Start Time:

recommended time: 35 minutes

In preparation for the small-group discussion, the facilitator provides a common understanding of how to participate in the activities to follow.

We walk together with Jesus on the road of life. This listening session is a time to share with one another the things that have taken place on our journey of faith and where Jesus is calling us to go together.

The facilitator will refer participants to the "Shared Norms for Dialogue" also included in the Participant Guide.

SESSION 2

We gather to pray, reflect, and dialogue. This process of listening and engaging does not seek to change any teachings of the Church. Rather, a listening session is an exercise in synodality—"journeying together."

Part of journeying together is a willingness to listen to and learn from each other. We may not agree on every matter, but with humility, sensitivity, and charity, we will listen to the experiences of others. Dialogue requires the courage both to listen and to speak. Above all, dialogue requires respect. We acknowledge each person here as a brother or sister in Christ, whom Jesus loves and for whom he died.

Therefore, as we engage in this listening session, we will:

- **speak clearly, one person at a time, without interruption,**
- **listen for understanding, with an open mind and without judgment,**
- **display attentive posture, conscious of body language and facial expressions,**
- **be sensitive to differences in communication styles,**
- **limit how long we speak so everyone has time to share,**
- **and speak only once until everyone else has had a chance to share.**

Slide Available

Participant Guide

In summary, we will treat each other with reverence and listen to each other with respect—we will be listening for the Holy Spirit among us!

In these or similar words, the facilitator introduces the first theme for discussion:

Our small-group discussions today will focus on themes related to Mission. For the next 30 minutes, we will discuss a series of questions about Going on Mission. You will find the discussion questions listed in your Participant Guide as well as a list of helpful terms for your reference.

One member of the group has been designated to take notes and fill out a Summary Form. During the last five minutes of your discussion, your note taker will lead you in creating a summary for the group.

At the end of this session, an appointed reporter will compile and synthesize the small-group reports and submit one report to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles for this parish (or community). The Archdiocese will then submit one report to the United States Conference of Catholics Bishops for use in the next phase of the synod.

In the questions, "Church" can mean the Archdiocese of Los Angeles or our parish (or community, apostolate, or group).

The small-group discussion questions can be projected on a screen or distributed to each participant.

Session 2, Discussion A: "Going on Mission"

- **In recent years, how have we called every baptized person to participate in the mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ?**
- **In recent years, how have we encouraged people to use their spiritual gifts for mission in the world?**
- **How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to "journey together" more fully with a clear sense of our common mission to proclaim the Gospel in the coming years?**
- **How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to focus on forming people as missionary disciples of Jesus?**

As you think of possibilities, perhaps pay attention to the ideas that give you clarity, enthusiasm, peace, and hope (these may be an indication of the promptings of the Spirit).

The facilitator indicates when five minutes remain in the discussion time. Each small group will summarize the main points of Discussion A, which the group note taker will write in the Small-Group Summary Form provided.

Break *The facilitator invites the participants to take a 10-minute break.*

Start Time:

recommended time: 10 minutes

Session 2, Discussion B: "Dialoguing"

Start Time:

recommended time: 30 minutes

For the next 30 minutes, we will discuss a series of questions on Dialoguing.

- **In recent years, how have we dialogued with people of other religions and people with no religious affiliation?**
- **In recent years, how have we learned from and contributed to other sectors of society (culture, politics, and economics)?**
- **In recent years, how have we collaborated in mission with Christians of other traditions and denominations?**
- **How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to "journey together" more fully through intentional dialogue in the years to come?**
- **To which issues in society might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to pay closer attention?**

As you think of possibilities, perhaps pay attention to the ideas that give you clarity, enthusiasm, peace, and hope (these may be an indication of the promptings of the Spirit).

CONCLUDE EACH SESSION WITH THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER ON PAGES 23-24

Session 3: Participation

Participant Arrival

The hospitality team will welcome participants as they arrive, answer questions, and direct participants to be seated in small groups.

If note takers have not been determined prior to the session or additional are needed, identify and invite individuals as they arrive to serve in the role, enough for each small group of six.

Welcome and Overview of Synodality

Start Time:

recommended time: 10 minutes

In these or similar words, the facilitator welcomes participants:

> **Welcome! Thank you for joining us for this third in a series of three listening sessions of the Synod in this parish (or community). I am N., and I will be the facilitator of this process.**

The facilitator can also invite those who will play a special role in the listening session to stand and be introduced.

In these or similar words, the facilitator provides an overview of synodality and the aim of the synod process:

> **As a recap for those who joined us last time and as an introduction for those joining us for the first time: In October 2021, His Holiness Pope Francis opened a worldwide synod process. In the language of the Church, a synod is an assembly, principally of bishops, that gathers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discuss and decide on matters in the Church's life and mission.**
>
> **The theme for the synod underway is "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission."**

The Greek word *synodos* is a fusion of two words: *syn*, meaning "together," and *hodos*, meaning "road," which can basically translate as "on the road together." Synodality is a style or mode of being Church, in which we journey together, both clergy and laity, each according to our roles and spiritual gifts. If we engage this process with an attitude of synodality, we can strengthen the bonds of communion with God and between us, model participation in and co-responsibility for the life of the Church, and go forth together on the mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

Opening Prayer

The facilitator leads the participants in the Synod prayer or invites the pastor to do so. The text of the prayer can be projected on a screen or distributed as a handout.

The Holy Spirit has gathered us here again in the name of Jesus. We pause for a moment to recognize that God is indeed with us.

Following a brief moment of silence, the facilitator begins the prayer.

With confidence in the presence and power of the Spirit, we 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.

**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.**

Overview of Listening Session

In these or similar words, the facilitator provides an overview of the listening session:

Once again, this synod listening session presents an invitation to listen deeply to one another and to discern how God is calling us to journey together more closely as his Church. The aim of this listening session is simply to be present to the Holy Spirit and to one another, to listen to and to learn from each other, and above all, to grow closer to Jesus Christ and his Church.

During this session, we will listen to and reflect on the Word of God and then will share in small groups on two main themes. There will be a break between each discussion and we will conclude by sharing about our time together with the full assembly.

Following our session today (and any other listening sessions hosted by our parish/community), a synthesis will be assembled of the feedback shared. Our report can also benefit this community as a foundation for ongoing discussion and planning for the future. The feedback will be utilized by a team tasked with creating a similar synthesis report for all parishes and communities for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Any participants not yet seated in small groups will be invited to join a group.

The facilitator then invites the participants to introduce themselves within their small groups.

We are sisters and brothers in Christ, which means there can be no stranger among us.

To begin our sharing, I invite each member of your group to introduce himself or herself by

- **teaching the group how to pronounce your name**
- **and by sharing something about any part of your name (first, middle, last, nickname) that tells us something about you.**

For example, my name is pronounced N. and…

The facilitator allows a few moments for small-group introductions.

Gospel Reflection

Start Time:

recommended time: 15 minutes

Together, we will now reflect on a Gospel passage from the Scriptures in our small groups. The Word of God is living and effective, speaking to each of us personally today. As you listen to the reading, ask yourself in silence: "Lord, what are you saying to me?"

Listen for a word or phrase that calls your attention or touches your heart.

Hold on to that word or phrase for sharing.

The facilitator pauses.

Once again, we call on the Holy Spirit: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."

The reading is included in the Listening Session Presentation Slides and may be projected while reading aloud and/or print/digital copies may be distributed while reading aloud.

Slide Available

A reading from the Gospel according to John.

Jesus said to his disciples:
"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.

**He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit,
and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit.
You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you.
Remain in me, as I remain in you.
Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own
unless it remains on the vine,
so neither can you unless you remain in me.
I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit,
because without me you can do nothing.**

**Anyone who does not remain in me
will be thrown out like a branch and wither;
people will gather them and throw them into a fire
and they will be burned.
If you remain in me and my words remain in you,
ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you.
By this is my Father glorified,
that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.
As the Father loves me, so I also love you.
Remain in my love.
If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love,
just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I
have told you this so that my joy may be in you
and your joy might be complete."**

The facilitator pauses to allow time for silent reflection.

In your small groups, I now invite you to share the word or phrase that you chose and why it stood out to you. If you feel comfortable, share a brief story or experience of how the word or phrase connects to your life at this moment. As you share, center on your personal experiences rather than teaching or preaching at this time.

The facilitator allows time for small-group sharing.

Thank you for sharing how God is speaking to you through his Word. In response to what we have heard in the Word and from each other, I invite you to ask yourself in silence, "Lord, what are you asking me to do?" Pray for the grace to do what Jesus asks.

The facilitator pauses to allow time for silent prayer.

Amen.

Shared Norms for Dialogue

In preparation for the small-group discussion, the facilitator provides a common understanding of how to participate in the activities to follow.

We walk together with Jesus on the road of life. This listening session is a time to share with one another the things that have taken place on our journey of faith and where Jesus is calling us to go together.

The facilitator will refer participants to the "Shared Norms for Dialogue" also included in the Participant Guide.

We gather to pray, reflect, and dialogue. This process of listening and engaging does not seek to change any teachings of the Church. Rather, a listening session is an exercise in synodality—"journeying together." Part of journeying together is a willingness to listen to and learn from each other. We may not agree on every matter, but with humility, sensitivity, and charity, we will listen to the experiences of others.

Dialogue requires the courage both to listen and to speak. Above all, dialogue requires respect. We acknowledge each person here as a brother or sister in Christ, whom Jesus loves and for whom he died.

Therefore, as we engage in this listening session, we will:

- **speak clearly, one person at a time, without interruption,**
- **listen for understanding, with an open mind and without judgment,**
- **display attentive posture, conscious of body language and facial expressions,**
- **be sensitive to differences in communication styles,**
- **limit how long we speak so everyone has time to share,**
- **and speak only once until everyone else has had a chance to share.**

In summary, we will treat each other with reverence and listen to each other with respect—we will be listening for the Holy Spirit among us!

Small-Group Discussions

In these or similar words, the facilitator introduces the first theme for discussion:

Our small-group discussions today will focus on themes related to Participation. For the next 30 minutes, we will discuss a series of questions on Discerning and Deciding. You will find the discussion questions listed in your Participant Guide as well as a list of helpful terms for your reference.

One member of the group has been designated to take notes and fill out a Summary Form. During the last five minutes of your discussion, your note taker will lead you in creating a summary for the group.

At the end of this session, an appointed reporter will compile and synthesize the small-group reports and submit one report to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles for this parish (or community). The Archdiocese will then submit one report to the United States Conference of Catholics Bishops for use in the next phase of the synod.

In the questions, "Church" can mean the Archdiocese of Los Angeles or our parish (or community, apostolate, or group).

The small-group discussion questions can be projected on a screen or distributed to each participant.

Session 3, Discussion A: "Discerning and Deciding"

- **In recent years, how have we intentionally listened to the voice of the Holy Spirit as a Church?**
- **In recent years, how have we identified needs within the Church and the world and how to address them?**
- **In recent years, how have our decision-making processes encouraged or discouraged wider consultation within the Church?**
- **How might the Church be invited to "journey together" more fully <u>through individual and communal listening to the Spirit</u> in the years to come?**
- **How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to "journey together" more fully <u>through consultative decision-making</u> in the years to come?**

As you think of possibilities, perhaps pay attention to the ideas that give you clarity, enthusiasm, peace, and hope (these may be an indication of the promptings of the Spirit).

The facilitator indicates when five minutes remain in the discussion time. Each small group will summarize the main points of Discussion A, which the group note taker will write in the Small-Group Summary Form provided.

Break

The facilitator invites the participants to take a 10-minute break.

Start Time:

recommended time: 10 minutes

Session 3, Discussion B: "Growing in Synodality"

Start Time:

recommended time: 30 minutes

For the next 30 minutes, we will discuss a series of questions on Growing in Synodality.

- **What are you learning about communion through the Synod process?**
- **What are you learning about participation through the Synod process?**
- **What are you learning about mission through the Synod process?**
- **How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to form people to "journey together" to live communion, to achieve participation, and to be open to mission?**

As you think of possibilities, perhaps pay attention to the ideas that give you clarity, enthusiasm, peace, and hope (these may be an indication of the promptings of the Spirit)

CONCLUDE EACH SESSION WITH THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER ON PAGES 23-24

Participant Arrival

The hospitality team will welcome participants as they arrive, answer questions, and direct participants to be seated in small groups.

If note takers have not been determined prior to the session or additional are needed, identify and invite individuals as they arrive to serve in the role, enough for each small group of six.

Welcome and Overview of the Synod and Synodality

Start Time:

recommended time: 10-15 minutes

In these or similar words, the facilitator welcomes participants:

> **Welcome! Thank you for joining us for this listening session of the Synod in this parish (or community). I am N., and I will be the facilitator of this process.**

The facilitator can also invite those who will play a special role in the listening session to stand and be introduced. In these or similar words, the facilitator provides an overview of the synod and synodality:

> **In October 2021, His Holiness Pope Francis opened a worldwide synod process. In the language of the Church, a synod is an assembly, principally of bishops, that gathers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discuss and decide on matters in the Church's life and mission.**

> **The theme for the synod underway is "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission." This synod is also unique because the Holy Father has summoned the whole Church to participate in a three-year process, culminating with an assembly of bishops in Rome in 2023.**

The Greek word *synodos* is a fusion of two words: *syn*, meaning "together," and *hodos*, meaning "road," which can basically translate as "on the road together." Synodality is a style or mode of being Church, in which we journey together, both clergy and laity, each according to our roles and spiritual gifts. If we engage this process in a spirit of synodality, we can deepen our communion with God and each other, model participation in and co-responsibility for the life of the Church, and go forth together on our mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

Pope Francis' stated aim of the synod of bishops in 2018 can well be applied to this synod, too. The intention of this process is "to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make 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."

In the face of global crises, the synod offers the Church a moment of grace bringing healing and hope. Archbishop José Gomez invites the Church in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to walk together in this synod process of prayer, reflection, and dialogue. During this "Forward in Mission" Jubilee Year celebrating 250 years of Catholic faith in the Archdiocese, the synod can be a source of renewal for our local Church as we seek to raise up a new generation of missionary disciples of Jesus Christ for our time.

Synod Prayer

The facilitator leads the participants in the Synod Prayer or invites the pastor to do so.

The text of the prayer can be projected on a screen or provided as a handout.

The Holy Spirit has gathered us here in the name of Jesus. We pause for a moment to recognize that God is indeed with us.

Following a brief moment of silence, the facilitator begins the prayer.

With confidence in the presence and power of the Spirit, we 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.
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.

Overview of the Listening Session

In these or similar words, the facilitator provides an overview of the listening session:

This synod listening session presents an invitation to listen deeply to one another and to discern how God is calling us to journey together more closely as his Church. The aim of this listening session is simply to be present to the Holy Spirit and to one another, to listen to and to learn from each other, and above all, to grow closer to Jesus Christ and his Church.

During this session, we will listen to and reflect on the Word of God and then will share in small groups on two main questions. There will be a break between each discussion and we will conclude by sharing about our time together with the full assembly.

Following our session today (and any other listening sessions hosted by our parish/community), a synthesis will be assembled of the feedback shared.

Our report can also benefit this community as a foundation for ongoing discussion and planning for the future. The feedback will be utilized by a team tasked with creating a similar synthesis report for all parishes and communities for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Any participants not yet seated in small groups will be invited to join a group.

The facilitator then invites the participants to introduce themselves within their small groups.

We are sisters and brothers in Christ, which means there can be no stranger among us. To begin our sharing, I invite each member of your group to introduce himself or herself by

- **teaching the group how to pronounce your name**
- **and by sharing something about any part of your name (first, middle, last, nickname) that tells us something about you.**

For example, my name is pronounced N. and…

The facilitator allows a few moments for small-group introductions.

Gospel Reflection

Start Time:

recommended time: 20 minutes

Together, we will now reflect on a Gospel passage from the Scriptures in our small groups. The Word of God is living and effective, speaking to each of us personally today. As you listen to the reading, ask yourself in silence: "Lord, what are you saying to me?"

Listen for a word or phrase that calls your attention or touches your heart.

Hold on to that word or phrase for sharing.

The facilitator pauses.

Once again, we call on the Holy Spirit: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."

The facilitator slowly and clearly reads the passage or invites someone else to do so.

The reading is included in the Listening Session Presentation Slides and may be projected while reading aloud and/or print/digital copies may be distributed while reading aloud.

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?"

And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, " The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive.

Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures.

As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

The facilitator pauses to allow time for silent reflection.

In your small groups, I now invite you to share the word or phrase that you chose and why it stood out to you. If you feel comfortable, share a brief story or experience of how the word or phrase connects to your life at this moment. As you share, center on your personal experiences rather than teaching or preaching at this time.

The facilitator allows time for small-group sharing.

Thank you for sharing how God is speaking to you through his Word. In response to what we have heard in the Word and from each other, I invite you to ask yourself in silence, "Lord, what are you asking me to do?" Pray for the grace to do what Jesus asks.

The facilitator pauses to allow time for silent prayer.

Amen.

Shared Norms for Dialogue

Start Time:

recommended time: 35 minutes

In preparation for the small-group discussion, the facilitator provides a common understanding of how to participate in the activities to follow.

We, like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, walk together with Jesus on the road of life. This listening session is a time to share with one another the things that have taken place on our journey of faith and where Jesus is calling us to go together.

The facilitator will refer participants to the "Shared Norms for Dialogue" also included in the Participant Guide.

We gather to pray, reflect, and dialogue. This process of listening and engaging does not seek to change any teachings of the Church. Rather, a listening session is an exercise in synodality—"journeying together." Part of journeying together is a willingness to listen to and learn from each other. We may not agree on every matter, but with humility, sensitivity, and charity, we will listen to the experiences of others.

Dialogue requires the courage both to listen and to speak. Above all, dialogue requires respect. We acknowledge each person here as a brother or sister in Christ, whom Jesus loves and for whom he died.

Part of journeying together is a willingness to listen to and learn from each other. We may not agree on every matter, but with humility, sensitivity, and charity, we will listen to the experiences of others.

Dialogue requires the courage both to listen and to speak. Above all, dialogue requires respect. We acknowledge each person here as a brother or sister in Christ, whom Jesus loves and for whom he died.

Therefore, as we engage in this listening session, we will:

- **speak clearly, one person at a time, without interruption,**
- **listen for understanding, with an open mind and without judgment,**
- **display attentive posture, conscious of body language and facial expressions,**
- **be sensitive to differences in communication styles,**
- **limit how long we speak so everyone has time to share,**
- **and speak only once until everyone else has had a chance to share.**

In summary, we will treat each other with reverence and listen to each other with respect—we will be listening for the Holy Spirit among us!

Small-Group Discussion 1: "Our Journey Together Now"

In these or similar words, the facilitator will explain the first small-group discussion:

You will find the discussion questions listed in your Participant Guide as well as a list of helpful terms for your reference.

Our small-group discussions today will focus on our journeying together as a Church.

"Journeying together" may mean, but is not limited to:

- **Listening to others on the journey and speaking on what matters to us about our parish/community and the Catholic Church,**
- **Celebrating beautiful and meaningful liturgy (Mass and the sacraments),**
- **Going on mission, empowered and equipped to proclaim the Gospel,**
- **Dialoguing with diverse members of our community and Christians of other traditions,**
- **Discerning and deciding, through participation in consultative processes,**
- **Growing in synodality through formation in walking together.**

In the questions, "Church" can mean the Archdiocese of Los Angeles or our parish (or community, apostolate, or group).

These characteristics of "Journeying Together" can be projected on a screen or provided on a handout.

For the next 30 minutes, we will discuss the following question:

- **How have we "journeyed together" as a Church in recent years?**
- **Please give concrete examples of fruitful experiences, as well as examples of what has hindered our journeying together.**
- **We invite you to share positive experiences and bring to light challenging and negative experiences.**

One member of the group has been designated to take notes and fill out a Summary Form.

During the last five minutes of your discussion, your note taker will lead you in creating a summary for the group.

At the end of this session, an appointed reporter will compile and synthesize the small-group reports and submit one report to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles for this parish (or community). The Archdiocese will then submit one report to the United States Conference of Catholics Bishops for use in the next phase of the synod.

The facilitator indicates when five minutes remain in the discussion time. Each small group will summarize the main points of Discussion A, which the group note taker will write in the Small-Group Summary Form provided.

Break

Start Time:

recommended time: 10 minutes

The facilitator invites the participants to take a 10-minute break.

Small-Group Discussion 2: "Journeying Together in the Future"

Start Time:

recommended time: 30 minutes

In these or similar words, the facilitator explains the next small-group discussion:

Participant Guide

Slide Available

For the next 30 minutes, we will discuss the next question:

- **How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to "journey together" more fully in the coming years?**
- **What are your hopes for the Church to live in deeper unity, to promote participation, and to proclaim the Gospel?**
- **Please give concrete examples.**

As you think of possibilities for the future, perhaps pay attention to the ideas that give you clarity, enthusiasm, peace, and hope (these may be an indication of the promptings of the Spirit).

Again, near the end of your discussion, the chosen group note taker will fill out the Summary Form with the group.

As a reminder, "journeying together" can mean:

- **Listening to others on the journey and speaking on what matters to us about our parish/community and the Catholic Church,**
- **Celebrating beautiful and meaningful liturgy (Mass and the sacraments),**
- **Going on mission, empowered and equipped to proclaim the Gospel,**
- **Dialoguing with diverse members of our community and Christians of other traditions,**
- **Discerning and deciding, through participation in consultative processes,**
- **Growing in synodality through formation in walking together.**

Again, "Church" can mean the Archdiocese of Los Angeles or our parish (or community, apostolate, or group).

The facilitator indicates when five minutes remain in the discussion time. Each small group will summarize the main points of Discussion B, which the group note taker will write in the Small-Group Summary Form provided.

CONCLUDE EACH SESSION WITH THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER ON PAGES 23-24

NOTE TAKER INSTRUCTIONS & SUMMARY FORM

For note takers to produce a good written record, they should present an accurate account of what they hear during the listening session. During the small-group discussion, he/she takes notes for each of the comments made by the individuals in the small group. The note taker should also record anything he/she shared as well.

A suggested format is provided to help capture all feedback shared.

- **Main Topic(s): answers the question, "what?"** and describes the central idea of what the person shared
- **Feedback Shared: answers the question "so what?"**and explains what the person had to say about his/her main topic

If multiple people share the same sentiment, it may be helpful to include tally marks next to each comment instead of writing it repeatedly, and to help remember how many people shared the same feedback (see example on following page).

During the final portion of each small-group discussion, the facilitator will instruct each group to review the notes taken thus far. The note taker will read the notes aloud and **capture any additional group comments**. The note taker will invite the group to **share any significant quotes or phrases** from other group members that stood out to them and record those as well.

Scan the QR code with a smartphone camera
or visit synod.lacatholics.org/training
for additional guidance on note taking.

Contact Information
(for community reporter to reach out to you for clarification, if necessary)

Name:_____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Discussion A	
Main Topic(s)	Feedback Shared:
Example: Parish Mission Series	|| Many people attended from different parts of the community
	𝍸 It was a good experience and would like again in future

Discussion B	
Main Topic(s)	Feedback Shared:
Example: Greater Unity	|| Continuing with multilingual Masses can support unity. 𝍸 There is a desire to begin ecumenical activities.

Additional Space for Notes	
Main Topic(s)	Feedback, Opinions, or Experiences Shared:

The reporter's main goal is to summarize the discussions that take place during the listening sessions. The written record should respond to the two main questions of the synod, *"How are we now journeying together as a church?"* and *"What steps does the Spirit invite us to take to grow in our 'journeying together'?"* In addition to these main questions, reporters should also consider the ten themes set out by the Vatican document, which, for ease of use, we have combined into the following six (1) Speaking and Listening, (2) Celebrating, (3) Going on Mission, (4) Dialoguing, (5) Discerning and Deciding, and (6) Growing in Synodality. These themes indicate what synodality means.

Context:

The online reporting form (see page 63 for preview) there will be places to provide details about when and how the listening session was hosted and who participated. Space is also provided to submit any other details about the session and the individuals gathered that would support the understanding of those reading the parish/community report.

Reviewing the Notes:

If completing the 3-Session Series Format, small-group summaries will largely already be categorized by Day and Discussion (e.g. Session 1, Discussion A = "Speaking and Listening."

- To the best of your ability, spend a few minutes to label the comments as follows:

SL	(**S**peaking and **L**istening)
C	(**C**elebrating)
M	(Going on **M**ission)
DL	(**D**ia**l**oguing)
DD	(**D**iscerning and **D**eciding)
GS	(**G**rowing in **S**ynodality)
U	(**U**nsure)

Example:

Many people attended a recent Parish Mission series. **(M)**

The parish has had fewer interreligious and ecumencial opportunities for several years than it had in the past. **(DL)**

Discerning & Synthesizing:

1. A template has been provided (available for download in Microsoft Word and Google Docs at synod.lacatholics.org/resources) to assist while summarizing and synthesizing the Parish/Community Listening Session Report.

2. Beginning with *Speaking and Listening*, gather all comments that fall within that theme, recategorizing when necessary.

3. Looking for commonalities, summarize the sharing into a maximum of 4 sentences and record them into **BOX A** on the *Parish & Community Summary Form.*

4. Identify any comments made that stood out as varying from the majority of the group, or as an original point of view, and record them into **BOX B** on the *Parish & Community Summary Form.* It is not necessary to have comments for every category.

Repeat steps 3 and 4 for each of the remaining categories:

a. Celebrating (BOX C and D)
b. Going on Mission (BOX E and F)
c. Dialoguing (BOX G and H)
d. Leading & Deciding (BOX I and J)
e. Growing in Synodality (BOX K and L)
f. Unsure (BOX M)

Copy and paste the information into the online form by **Friday, April 8, 2022** at synod.lacatholics.org/submit. **Do not email any documents.**

SYNTHESIS REPORT ONLINE SUBMISSION FORM

The template below is provided to assist you while synthesizing the feedback gathered during your listening session. A Microsoft Word/Google Doc version of this document is available for download at synod.lacatholics.org/resources.

Do not email this form. Please copy and paste your responses to the online form at https://synod.lacatholics.org/submit **by Friday, April 8, 2022.**

Upon successful submission at the website above, a confirmation email and copy of your report will be automatically delivered to the following people:

Name, Email & Phone Number of Person Submitting Report and Person who Synthesized Report *(if different from the person submitting)*

Name, Title and Email of Additional Person to Receive Report (e.g. Pastor, Superior)

CONTEXT While not all participants may have disclosed their demographic information, please provide as much information about your listening sessions as you are able.

Date(s), Time(s), and Duration(s) and Format of Listening Sessions

Parish(es) or Non-parish Community that Participated

Total Number of Participants *(required)*	

Additional information about the context of the listening sessions or the people that were gathered - "the attitudes of the participants, and the joys and challenges of engaging together in discernment" :

ADDITIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION *(response for each not required)*

Number of Participants

Ages 14-17:	Ages 18-25:	Ages 26-39:
Ages 40-55:	Ages 56-74:	Ages 75+:

Number of Participants

Female:	Male:

Number of Participants that identify as

Asian:	Black or African American:	Caucasian:
Hispanic or Latino:	Native American:	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander:
Other:		

Number of Participants that describe themselves as

Active Catholic since birth:	Inactive Catholic:	Catholic convert:
Returned Catholic:	Non-Catholic:	

Number of Participants that attend Mass

Never or Rarely:	A few times a year:	Once or twice a month:
Almost every week:	Every week:	More than once a week:

BOX A Summarize the highlights and common themes regarding **"Speaking and Listening"**

-
-
-
-

BOX B Summarize any points of view that *varied* from the majority of comments on **"Speaking and Listening"**

-
-

BOX C Summarize the highlights and common themes regarding **"Celebrating"**

-
-
-
-

BOX D Summarize any points of view that *varied* from the majority of comments on **"Celebrating"**

-
-

BOX E Summarize the highlights and common themes regarding **"Going on Mission"**

-
-
-
-

BOX F Summarize any points of view that *varied* from the majority of comments on **"Going on Mission"**

-
-

BOX G Summarize the highlights and common themes regarding **"Dialoguing"**

-
-
-
-

BOX H Summarize any points of view that *varied* from the majority of comments on **"Dialoguing"**

-
-

BOX I Summarize the highlights and common themes regarding **"Discerning and Deciding"**

-
-
-
-

BOX J Summarize any points of view that *varied* from the majority of comments on **"Discerning and Deciding"**

-
-

BOX K Summarize the highlights and common themes regarding **"Growing in Synodality"**

-
-
-
-

BOX L Summarize any points of view that *varied* from the majority of comments on **"Growing in Synodality"**

-
-

Please provide the information below as you are comfortable. All data collected is anonymous:

Age: ☐ 14-17 ☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-39
☐ 40-55 ☐ 56-74 ☐ 75+

Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male

Ethnicity (check all that apply):
☐ Asian ☐ Black or African-American
☐ Caucasian ☐ Hispanic or Latino
☐ Native American
☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
☐ Other_____

Please provide the information below as you are comfortable. All data collected is anonymous:

Age: ☐ 14-17 ☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-39
☐ 40-55 ☐ 56-74 ☐ 75+

Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male

Ethnicity (check all that apply):
☐ Asian ☐ Black or African-American
☐ Caucasian ☐ Hispanic or Latino
☐ Native American
☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
☐ Other_____

Please provide the information below as you are comfortable. All data collected is anonymous:

Age: ☐ 14-17 ☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-39
☐ 40-55 ☐ 56-74 ☐ 75+

Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male

Ethnicity (check all that apply):
☐ Asian ☐ Black or African-American
☐ Caucasian ☐ Hispanic or Latino
☐ Native American
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☐ Other_____

Please provide the information below as you are comfortable. All data collected is anonymous:

Age: ☐ 14-17 ☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-39
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Ethnicity (check all that apply):
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Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male

Ethnicity (check all that apply):
☐ Asian ☐ Black or African-American
☐ Caucasian ☐ Hispanic or Latino
☐ Native American
☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
☐ Other_____

What *best* describes you:
☐ Active Catholic since birth
☐ Inactive Catholic ☐ Catholic convert
☐ Returned Catholic ☐ Non-Catholic

How frequently do you currently attend Mass?
☐ Never or rarely ☐ A few times a year
☐ Once or twice a month ☐ Almost every week
☐ Every week ☐ More than once a week

Please provide the information below as you are comfortable. All data collected is anonymous:

Age: ☐ 14-17 ☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-39 ☐ 40-55 ☐ 56-74 ☐ 75+

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What *best* describes you:
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☐ Every week ☐ More than once a week

Appendix 1

Facilitating Potentially Difficult Synodal Consultations

As facilitator you may find some consultations are difficult because of people who have traumatic experience of Church through abuse, people who (often unknowingly) attempt to hijack a consultation for their own agenda, or who have few effective filters for what they might say. There are some ways to mitigate or respond to those situations.

1. **Preparation and clarity of purpose**

- Set clear expectations, process and purpose early and keep on topic.
- Set the tone as prayerful and reflective.
- What may be reported out of the synodal consultation is not what we all agree upon, but what we discern as having potential to be the will of God for the Church in the future. Even conflicting perspectives can be reported.
- Be clear that the synodal consultations are not equipped to provide the support that those who suffered abuse need, and at the same time we need to hear those who choose to raise the abuses by the Church as pertinent to our considerations of a future Church.
- Be clear that our purpose is to help form a more synodal and listening Church and that means keeping an open mind so the Spirit can work in all of us. Don't let our personal agendas limit our conversations.

2. **Responding to a speaker who talks of the trauma of abuse by a minister of the Church**

Tragically, some consultation participants will have had traumatic experiences of Church. Facilitators must take into account that those traumas are real and deserve our compassion above all. It is also true that the synodal consultation is not the place for long discourses of those tragedies. It is the place to recall and acknowledge that they happened, that they had a severe negative impact on individuals, families, faith communities, and the Church as a whole, and need to be prevented. For example, it is appropriate to recall that those tragedies happened and to talk about, for example, how a synodal Church might help prevent them happening again.

What can a facilitator do when an abuse survivor speaks?

a. Acknowledge the trauma is real and deep.

b. Thank the speaker for their courage, acknowledge the depth of hurt you hear as they speak.

c. Set a boundary such as "I'm glad you had the courage to bring this tragedy up. While we cannot go deeply into the personal stories in this consultation, we do need to acknowledge the pain those abusers and coverups by Church leaders caused."

Source: https://leadershiproundtable.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Process-for-Facilitating-Synodal-Consultations_Oct-2021_FINAL.pdf

d. Set a direction such as "Those tragedies must be part of our considerations in these synodal consultations, which are forward leaning, looking at a renewed Church where such things cannot happen. As we consider the direction the Church needs to go, please keep the survivors and their families in mind. We do not want that abuse to continue."

3. Responding to people with agendas

It may happen that either individuals or groups attend synodal consultations and come with particular agendas. When a facilitator can recognize this, there are approaches that may help keep the conversation on track.

When an individual or group expresses absolute certainty, a facilitator can respond with curiosity: "Help me understand…," "I am wondering whether/if…," or "I have a question…"

When an individual or group blames others, a facilitator can respond by inviting other perspectives and developing consensus: "How could any of us make a difference here?" "Are there some steps we would agree together that would be helpful here?" "How could all of us be part of the solution?"

Sometimes it is also necessary to restate the purpose and nature of the synodal consultation. "The synodal consultation is forward looking, envisioning the Church of the future, and we are approaching this in a reflective, prayerful manner, keeping an open mind so the Spirit can surface the direction forward for our Church. Let us all please take a moment to place ourselves in an internal space where we can constructively participate by how we listen and how we speak."

4. Responding to people with no filters

Some people of goodwill speak without awareness of the impact they have on others by how they speak or the words that they say. It is more than just abrupt; it is doing harm to others even if they see it as "just being honest" or something similar.

The facilitator may need a graduated response to such people:

- Gently interrupt the speaker and remind them that we need to be respectful of others.
- Gently tell the speaker the impact they are having on some people in the room.
- Call upon the group to share how this speaker is impacting them (If you think they will speak up and if they are willing to share that through you as the facilitator).
- Ask the speaker to change how they are speaking (e.g., softer, more aware of how people are hearing them, focus on the question not the person).
- Suggest a break or a time for reflection and quietly approach the speaker and ask for a change in delivery or tell the speaker the group will be moving on after the break.

Source: https://leadershiproundtable.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Process-for-Facilitating-Synodal-Consultations_Oct-2021_FINAL.pdf

Guidance for Facilitators and Note Takers for Possible Disclosures of Sexual Abuse During ADLA Synod Listening Sessions

While it is quite possible that you will never know who the victim-survivors in your audience are, you may have victim-survivors or their loved ones in your sessions. Some victim-survivors and loved ones may choose to make a public disclosure during your session. The challenge is to both be supportive of the person making a disclosure while sustaining the focus and momentum of the session and its goals.

- **Listen** attentively to the disclosure,
- **affirm** the courage to disclose,
- **acknowledge** what has been endured,
- and **thank the person for trusting the group** assembled with this story.

- Acknowledge, too, that this is a sensitive and emotional experience for all in attendance.
- Offer to speak individually with the person at the conclusion of the session. Resume the session.

After the session is concluded, speak to the reporting person and please forward their name and contact information to

Dr. Heather Banis in Victims Assistance Ministry
hbanis@la-archdiocese.org or 213.637.7650

so outreach and support can be provided by the Archdiocese.

Family Listening Session

within a Regular Catechetical Program or Separately

Contributed by Suzette Sornborger
St. Monica Pastoral Associate, Director of Faith Formation

Preparation for the Family Listening Session:

- Read pages 4-8 from the *Parish and Community Toolkit* to get an understanding of the Synodal process for the Archdiocese and view the PowerPoint provided as an overview (synod.lacatholics.org/resources).
- Choose a date and time that works best for families and the parish/community.
- Gather a Team of people: facilitators (parents and catechists), hospitality members and note takers; invite parents and catechists to take on that role. They will need some instructions found on page 53-56 of the Synod *Parish and Community Toolkit*.
- If you are using this process as part of your catechetical gathering, let the parents know that this day will be a little different. If you are using this process separate from your regular class sessions, then create a special invitation encouraging families to attend this experience.
    - The Holy Father Pope Francis has invited the Church to come together in a worldwide gathering as People of God to talk about Communion, Participation and Mission. Everyone is encouraged to participate: young children and families in particular. Your voice is important to the Church. Join us for an hour and a half of praying, playing, and listening.
- Print and cut out the questions in squares (see appendix 2)
- Purchase lunch size brown bags

Preparation for the Family Listening Session: Day of Event

- Set up table and chairs arranged for 1-2 family units per table.
- Have your Hospitality in place to welcome the people.
- Confirm that you have a Note Taker at each table (remember a parent can do it). Provide each Note Taker with a copy of the Note Taker Summary Report Form (see Appendix 1) and a writing tool.
- Provide print/digital handouts of the Synod Prayer, Gospel reflection reading and process, and small-group discussion questions in the Participant Guide for families. QR codes are also available to direct participants to digital handouts.
- Provide print/digital form for participants to provide demographic information.

Format of Family Listening Session

- Duration: 1 hr. - 1 hr. 30 min.
- Suggested time: weekday evening or Saturday morning, Sunday after Mass or during regular Faith formation Session
- Have brown Paper bag with questions in them ready to distribute.
- Recommended schedule: (specifics below) 1-Day Listening Session
  - Welcome (2 min.)
  - Overview of the Synod, Synodality and what it means to Listen (5 min.)
  - Synod Family Prayer (2 min.)
  - Table activity and introductions (8-10 min.)
  - Gospel Reflection Process & Small-Group Discussion (40-45 min.)
  - Break - *if needed and/or if time allows* (5. min.)
  - Thanksgiving and Closing Prayer (5 min

Welcome

Thank you all for being with us today. We are so excited to have you here and to LISTEN to what you have to say, even our littlest voices! I ask that you stay in your family units throughout our time together as this will help our time together run smoothly.

Do any of you have family meetings in your home?

(Affirm nods, raised hands and shouts of yes)

Our gathering today is like a family meeting of sorts. If you are accustomed to family meetings, this will be familiar. If you are not, this will be a new adventure for you!

Overview of Synod and Synodality

Pope Francis has invited the People of God, that would be me and you, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit to gather together and share thoughts and feelings about important matters of Church life and mission.

The special part about this is that we have to really listen to what each person is saying. Does anyone know what it means to listen?

Take a minute for the children to share their thoughts on what it means to listen.
(Affirm nods, raised hands and shouts of yes)

Okay, so let's a look at the word LISTEN
L is to listen carefully to learn
I is to identify important, key information.
S is for sharing our stories (everyone will have a turn)
T is a reminder to be tender-hearted
E is to encourage everyone who is sharing
N is NO interruption while another is talking

Does that all make sense?

I know that this kind of listening can sometimes be hard, especially with brothers and sisters. Today we are going to work hard to really hear each other!

(Affirm those that nod or say yes)

I know that this kind of listening can sometimes be hard, especially with brothers and sisters. Today we are going to work hard to really hear each other!

Prayer

Prayer:(Invite everyone to stand up for prayer)
+ Good and loving God,
We thank you for this day and the time to be together in this special way, to listen to each other. We are grateful for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we gather in Your name. We ask that you open our hearts and minds to hear, to be kind and to love as you would love. In your name we pray. Amen.

Table Activity

I invite you to share at your table the following:
1. Please introduce yourselves to the other family at your table.
2. Where did you see God in your day today or maybe even this week? You'll say, I saw God in or through_____ Practice your listen skills!

Gospel Reading

This is a long Gospel so you may want to choose to show a video instead. Multiple YouTube options are linked at synod.lacatholics.org/participant.

LUKE 24:13–35
After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to many of his disciples. He encountered two of these disciples shortly after his death and resurrection just outside of Jerusalem. They were traveling on the road to a village called Emmaus.

As you read this story, pay attention to the way the disciples finally realize that it was Jesus who was with them.

It was a difficult few days for the disciples of Jesus. They had seen and heard about the death of their Lord. They were all alone now with no one to lead them. Two of these disciples left the city of Jerusalem, where Jesus was crucified, and began to walk the seven miles to a village called Emmaus.

They were walking along the road, talking about all that had happened, when Jesus came near and began to walk with them. In their sadness, the disciples did not recognize that it was Jesus who came near to them.

"What are you talking about as you walk along the road?" Jesus asked.

They stopped and looked at one another in sadness. "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place these last few days?"

"What things?" Jesus asked.

"The things about Jesus of Nazareth, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be crucified," said one of the disciples.

"We had hoped that he was the one who would redeem Israel. Today is the third day since he died," said the other disciple.

The first disciple jumped in and said, "Moreover, some women of our group have astounded us. They were at his tomb this morning, and they did not find his body there. They told us they had a vision of angels who said he was alive!"

"Others went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him," said the other disciple.

"Oh, how foolish you are, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets declared!" Jesus said. "It was necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory."

Then, as they continued to walk, Jesus interpreted many things that the prophets, beginning with Moses, had said about him in the scriptures.

Finally, they arrived in the village of Emmaus, and Jesus walked ahead of them. "Stay with us! It is almost evening, and the day is now nearly over," the disciples shouted.

So Jesus came back to stay with them. They sat down for a meal, and Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples.

At that moment, their eyes were opened, and they recognized Jesus for the first time. Then he vanished from their sight.

They turned to each other. "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was explaining the scriptures to us?"

They got up immediately and returned to Jerusalem to tell the apostles about their encounter with Christ.

Gospel Sharing and Process

At your tables, one at a time, share a word or a phrase from the Gospel story that stood out for you or what part of the story did you like the most?

Give time to share.

We, like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, walk together with Jesus on the road of life. This listening session is a time to share with one another the things that have taken place on our journey of faith and where Jesus is calling us to go together.

Part of walking together is being able to listen to each other. Sometimes we may agree and sometimes we won't agree with what the other person is saying. Our job is to listen and not interrupt. Do you remember when I talked about the word LISTEN that the N means NO interruption. Okay are we ready to try this listening experience?

(Affirm those that nod and say yes)

I can't <u>hear</u> you can say it a little louder?

Table Discussion

> **Please take the brown paper bag from the center of the table. Whomever is the assigned Note Taker, please take notes on their responses and acknowledge them by saying "thank you for sharing" when they are done. Remember we are supporting each other by just listening.**

One at a time, each person will pull a card out and read their question out loud (a parent may need to help) Everyone listens to the question and the person's response.

> **Whomever is the assigned Note Taker, please take notes on their responses and acknowledge them by saying "thank you for sharing" when they are done. Remember we are supporting each other by just listening.**

1. How have you "walked" with your family and friends in the Church recently? "Walking "could be participating in VBS, Sunday School, going to Mass, First Communion, Confirmation, Baptism, talking with your friends after Mass at coffee and donuts, or other times that you can remember with friends and families.
2. What do you think we can do as a Church to spread the Gospel, to your friends and the community? How can you invite others to find faith and know Jesus?
3. Where do you see the Holy Spirit touching you and your friends as you all walk the journey of faith together?
4. Share a time when you were really excited to go to Church for Mass, or another celebration, and how did this make you feel?
5. Can you describe a time when you went to Church not because it felt good, but because things were bad, and you needed the support of Jesus?
6. Have you gone to Church sometimes because your parents made you or out of obligation? Did you still experience God in that Mass? What was it like?

Break

You can take a 5-minute break after 3 people have shared if needed or if time allows.

Table Discussion Wrap Up

Invite everyone to focus back to the front of the room. When you have everyone's attention, ask them how the process was. (Listen to comments and affirm) Then invite them to consider one more question as a table. Invite the Note Taker to continue taking notes on the responses:

- **Thinking about what you heard and shared at your tables, can you think of ways that the Church can support children and families and how your family can support the Church? What would make you more excited about participating in Church activities?**

Thanksgiving and Closing Prayer

(invite everyone to stand)

Today we have shared rich experiences of faith. As People of God, we listened to each other and heard our thoughts and feelings about our walk of faith. In thanksgiving for the gift of this time together, I invite you to think of a specific grace or blessing you received from this experience.

(Invite those who wish to share, to share. Affirm by repeating their grace)

As we close in prayer, I invite you to get in a circle with your family unit and hold hands. Repeat each sentence after me.

Lord Jesus,

We give you thanks and praise for gathering us here today.
And, for guiding us in this process of listening.
We are thankful for the many ways that you walk with us in our journey of faith.
Especially, with our family, friends and community.
May all we say and do be guided by your Spirit.
And may this time of listening bring much joy to your Church.
We ask this in your most holy name. Amen.

And finally, take a moment to bless each other on the head by making the sign of the cross.

Thank you for being here. God bless!

FAMILY LISTENING SESSION NOTE TAKER FORM

For note takers to produce a good written record, they should present an accurate account of what they hear during the listening session. During the small-group discussion, he/she takes notes for each of the comments made by the individuals in the small group. The note taker should also record anything he/she shared as well.

Contact Information
(for community reporter to reach out to you for clarification, if necessary)

Name:_____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

1. How have you "walked" with your family and friends in the Church recently?
"Walking" could be VBS, Sunday School, going to Mass, First Communion, Confirmation, baptism, talking with your friends after Mass at coffee and donuts, or other times that you can remember with friends and families.

2. What do you think we can do as a Church to spread the Gospel, to your friends and the community? How can you invite others to find faith and know Jesus?

3. Where do you see the Holy Spirit touching you and your friends as you all walk the journey of faith together?

4. Share a time when you were really excited to go to Church for Mass, or another celebration, and how did this make you feel?

5. Can you describe a time when you went to Church not because it felt good, but because things were bad, and you needed the support of Jesus?

6. Have you gone to Church sometimes because your parents made you or out of obligation? Did you still experience God in that Mass? What was it like?

7. Thinking about what you heard and shared, what comes to mind in ways the Church might better reach out to youth and families and how your family can support the Church? What would make you more excited about participating in Church activities?

How have you "walked" with your family and friends in the Church recently?

"Walking" could be Sunday School, going to Mass, First Communion, Confirmation, VBS, baptism, talking with your friends after Mass at coffee and donuts, or other times that you can remember with friends and families.

QUESTION 1

What do you think we can do as a Church to spread the Gospel, to your friends and the community? How can you invite others to find faith and know Jesus?

QUESTION 2

Where do you see the Holy Spirit touching you and your friends as you all walk the journey of faith together?

QUESTION 3

Share a time when you were really excited to go to Church for Mass, or another celebration, and how did this make you feel?

QUESTION 4

Can you describe a time when you went to Church not because it felt good, but because things were bad, and you needed the support of Jesus?

QUESTION 5

Have you gone to Church sometimes because your parents made you or out of obligation? Did you still experience God in that Mass? What was it like?

QUESTION 6

2

Synod 21-23
For a synodal Church

1

Synod 21-23
For a synodal Church

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3

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For a synodal Church

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5

Helpful Terms

communion – an intimate union between persons. God is a communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; God reveals himself to draw people into communion with him and with each other. The reception of Holy Communion (Eucharist) is a concrete expression and strengthening of communion with Christ and his Church.

consultation – a process in which the pastors of the Church seek the counsel of the People of God, clergy and laity alike. A synod listening session is an example of a consultative process in the Church.

discernment – the art of interpreting the promptings of the Holy Spirit guiding a person or a community to align their will with God's will. Discernment is a process of listening for the Holy Spirit in the Word of God, in prayer, and in the voices of spiritual companions.

ecumenism – the promotion of unity among Christians through dialogue and friendship, as well as common prayer and mission

mission – a sending for a purpose. In love, the Father sent the Son to save the world by his life, death, and resurrection, and Jesus sends his disciples to carry on his mission. The Church's mission is to evangelize, to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the aim of raising up missionary disciples who extend the kingdom of God.

participation – a contribution to the Church's life. Participation is an expression of co-responsibility: every baptized person is called to participate in the life of the Church and sent to participate in her mission in the world. A parish pastoral council is an example of a participatory body in the Church.

LA Catholics

Scan for Gospel Readings & Listening Session Resources or visit synod.lacatholics.org/participant

Synod 21-23

For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

Archdiocese of Los Angeles Listening Sessions

Participant Guide

Prayer for the Synod

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.

In October 2021, His Holiness Pope Francis opened a worldwide synod process. A *synod* is an assembly, principally of bishops, that gathers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discuss and decide on matters in the Church's life and mission. This synod is unique because the Holy Father has summoned the whole Church to participate in a three-year process prior to an assembly of bishops in Rome in 2023.

The Greek word *synodos* is a fusion of two words which translates as "on the road together." *Synodality* is a way of being Church, in which the whole People of God journey together each according to their roles and spiritual gifts. With a spirit of synodality, we can deepen our communion with God and each other, model participation in the life of the Church, and go forth together on our mission to proclaim the Gospel to the world.

In the face of global crises, the synod offers the Church a moment of grace by which to pray and reflect on a synodal way forward in her life and mission. Participation in the synod can be a source of renewal in our parishes and communities as we aim to raise up a new generation of missionary disciples of Jesus Christ for our time.

Shared Norms for Dialogue

As we engage in this listening session, we will:

- speak clearly, one person at a time, without interruption,
- listen for understanding, with an open mind and without judgment,
- display attentive posture, conscious of body language and facial expressions,
- be sensitive to differences in communication styles,
- limit how long we speak so everyone has time to share,
- and speak only once until everyone else has had a chance to share.

Session 1, Discussion A: "Listening and Speaking"

- Who is and who is not walking together with Jesus Christ in the Church today?
- In recent years, how has our Church "journeyed together" by providing opportunities for people to be heard?
- In recent years, how have we ignored or even excluded the voices of people on the margins of society and the sidelines of the Church?
- What keeps us from speaking with courage and charity on what matters to us for the life of the Church?
- How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to "journey together" more fully **through intentional listening and speaking to one another** in the coming years?

As you think of possibilities, perhaps pay attention to the ideas that give you clarity, enthusiasm, peace, and hope (these may be an indication of the promptings of the Spirit).

Session 1, Discussion B: "Celebrating"

- In recent years, how have experiences of prayer and the celebration of the liturgy (Mass and the sacraments) deepened our communion with God and with each other?
- In recent years, how have experiences of prayer and the celebration of the liturgy (Mass and the sacraments) guided our common life and mission?
- How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to "journey together" more fully through a richer celebration of the liturgy in the years to come?
- How might the Holy Spirit be inviting us to promote Sunday Mass attendance and active participation in the celebration of the liturgy?

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Session 2

Discussion A: "Going on Mission"

- In recent years, how have we called every baptized person to participate in the mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
- In recent years, how have we encouraged people to use their spiritual gifts for mission in the world?
- How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to "journey together" more fully **with a clear sense of our common mission to proclaim the Gospel** in the coming years?
- How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church **to focus on forming people as missionary disciples of Jesus**?

As you think of possibilities, perhaps pay attention to the ideas that give you clarity, enthusiasm, peace, and hope (these may be an indication of the promptings of the Spirit).

Discussion B: "Dialoguing"

- In recent years, how have we dialogued with people of other religions and people with no religious affiliation?
- In recent years, how have we learned from and contributed to other sectors of society (culture, politics, and economics)?
- In recent years, how have we collaborated in mission with Christians of other traditions and denominations?
- How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to "journey together" more fully **through intentional dialogue** in the years to come?
- To which **issues in society** might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church **to pay closer attention**?

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Session 3

Discussion A: "Discerning and Deciding"

- In recent years, how have we intentionally listened to the voice of the Holy Spirit as a Church?
- In recent years, how have we identified needs within the Church and the world and how to address them?
- In recent years, how have our decision-making processes encouraged or discouraged wider consultation within the Church?
- How might the Church be invited to "journey together" more fully **through individual and communal listening to the Spirit** in the years to come?
- How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to "journey together" more fully **through consultative decision-making** in the years to come?

As you think of possibilities, perhaps pay attention to the ideas that give you clarity, enthusiasm, peace, and hope (these may be an indication of the promptings of the Spirit).

Discussion B: "Growing in Synodality"

- What are you learning about communion through the Synod process?
- What are you learning about participation through the Synod process?
- What are you learning about mission through the Synod process?
- How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to form people to "journey together" **to live communion, to achieve participation, and to be open to mission**?

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Discussion A: "Our Journey Together Now"

- How have we "journeyed together" as a Church in recent years?
- Please give concrete examples of fruitful experiences, as well as examples of what has hindered our journeying together.
- We invite you to share positive experiences and bring to light challenging and negative experiences.

"Journeying together" can mean:

- **Listening to others on the journey and speaking on what matters to us about our parish/community and the Catholic Church,**
- **Celebrating beautiful and meaningful liturgy (Mass and the sacraments),**
- **Going on mission, empowered and equipped to proclaim the Gospel,**
- **Dialoguing with diverse members of our community and Christians of other traditions,**
- **Discerning and deciding, through participation in consultative processes,**
- **Growing in synodality through formation in walking together.**

"Church" can mean the Archdiocese of Los Angeles or our parish (or community, apostolate, or group).

Discussion B: "Journeying Together in the Future"

- How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to "journey together" more fully in the coming years?
- What are your hopes for the Church to live in deeper unity, to promote participation, and to proclaim the Gospel?
- Please give concrete examples.
- As you think of possibilities, perhaps pay attention to the ideas that give you clarity, enthusiasm, peace, and hope (these may be an indication of the promptings of the Spirit).

Day 1 of 3 and
1-Day Listening Session

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?"

And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive.

Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures.
As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

Day 2 of 3 Listening Session

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they all saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

Day 3 of 3 Listening Session

A reading from the Gospel according to John.

Jesus said to his disciples: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete.”