

# For a Synodal Church

Communion, Participation and Mission



## Parish Empowerment Toolkit



For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission



COURAGEOUSLY  
Living the Gospel

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



Why a Synod?  
To Learn what the Holy Spirit is  
saying to our Church today.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



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## Letter from Bishop Gregory Parkes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Thank you for your participation in the Universal Synod entitled, *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*. This Synod is an opportunity to reclaim our identity as a pilgrim Church that “journeys together.” We are called to be a Church that listens intently to one another and to the Holy Spirit.

The Synod process is rooted in an encounter with Jesus in the Sacred Scriptures and the liturgical life of the Church and is inspired by an openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit. We seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance on how to move forward as we emerge from a global pandemic, a world in turmoil and a Church in crisis.

As parish leaders, you play an integral role in the Synod process by engaging with our people: those in our parishes and those who have left the practice of their faith or who are on the peripheries, such as the homeless and the immigrant. Thank you for joining me on this journey of prayer, listening, dialogue and discernment.

In 2017, when I began my service as Bishop of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, we conducted listening sessions throughout the Diocese which culminated in the pastoral plan for our Diocese, “Courageously Living the Gospel.” We now join the Universal Church in discerning the direction of the Holy Spirit for our Church in the third millennium. Together, we will develop a report to be submitted to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), who will bring it forward to the Synod of Bishops at their meeting in 2023.

This Parish Empowerment Toolkit is a step-by-step guide for deaneries, parishes, school, lay associations, and local faith communities to engage in the Synod process. Additional information about the Synod, as well as a timeline, can be found on our diocesan website: [www.dosp.org/synod](http://www.dosp.org/synod). Resources will continue to be added throughout our Synod process.

This Synod offers us the opportunity to be present to each other, to invite our family and friends back to the faith, to listen to each other’s joys and sorrows, and to share our hopes and dreams for the future.

Thank you for your prayers for me. Be assured of my constant prayers for you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Gregory L. Parkes

Bishop of St Petersburg

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The idea of a synod is not something new; synods emerged from the early Church and the 2021-2023 synod process is not simply “another program” or a “new initiative.” Therefore, “having a synod” is just part of synodality. Synodality is **a way of being Church**, not just an event or program.



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## History of Synods in the Catholic Church

The Church journeying together in a Synod is an ancient practice in Christianity rooted in Scripture.

In the *Acts of the Apostles* (Chapter 15), we hear about Peter and Paul being “welcomed by the church, as well as by the apostles and the presbyters” (Acts 15: 4) to listen, discuss, and discern together how to reconcile Jewish and Gentile religious practices. It was after much listening, discussion, and prayerful silence listening for the voice of the Holy Spirit, did the early Church discern how to proclaim the Gospel to all people.

Several Church Fathers wrote about Synodality in the early Church (c. 30 AD- c. 500 AD), including St. John Chrysostom who wrote that the “Church and Synod as synonymous” (Commentary on Psalm 149 see Preparatory Document no. 11). Local Churches gathered together with their bishops to discuss matters related to their local situation throughout the first millennium. This local practice grew to provincial (regional) and universal (ecumenical) councils that would gather bishops, clergy, religious and laity together.

The practice of Synodality continued into the second millennium, even as decision-making was reserved more and more to bishops and the Holy See. The Second Vatican Council, an ecumenical council, emphasized the communion of the Church and reclaimed the image of the Church as the Pilgrim People of God journeying together towards holiness. “...there is but one People of God, which takes its citizens from every race, making them citizens of a kingdom which is of a heavenly and not an earthly nature. For all the faithful scattered throughout the world are in communion with each other in the Holy Spirit...” (Lumen Gentium no. 13).

St. Pope Paul VI created the modern structure of the Synod of Bishops in 1965 after the close of the Second Vatican Council. Pope Paul wanted to ensure that the collaboration and dialogue between bishops, theologians, religious and the lay faithful continued after the Second Vatican Council. Since 1967, the Church has held a Synod of Bishops roughly every 2-3 years to examine an issue affecting the Church. At each of these Synods since 1967, bishops have consulted with members of the clergy, religious and the laity. In fact, at these Synods, priests, deacons, religious and laity have been present and have addressed the bishops and Pope.

While the “new” aspect of this modern Synod, “*For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*” is asking each diocesan bishop to listen and consult with his flock, the Synodal process of listening and consulting with the entire People of God is an ancient practice.



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## What is Synod?

The words "synod" and "synodality" have three main uses in the Church:

1. "Synod" as used in phrases like "the Synod of Bishops" refers to a standing body of bishops who, for example, aid the Pope in **listening** to and guiding the Church.
2. More often "synod" refers to an event, a gathering, most often of bishops, to **discuss challenges** that the Church faces and to discern together how to move forward.
3. Finally, "synodality" refers to a style that characterizes the life of the entire Church, a habit of **mutual listening, dialogue, and collective discernment**. This style is most apparent during synods but ought to characterize the life of the Church in all times and at every level.



# Diocese of St. Petersburg Timeline



## For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission XVI Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops

**OCT. 17, 2021**

Opening Mass of the Diocesan Phase of the Synod on Synodality

**NOV. 8-10, DEC. 4, 2021**

Parish Empowerment Sessions

**ADVENT SEASON, 2021**

Deanery Synod Center Sessions/Parish Local Synod Sessions  
(Part I) Prayer & Learning

**JAN. 1 - MARCH 25, 2022**

Synod Sessions for Peripheries, Special Ministries or Lay Associations

**JAN. 1-FEB.15, 2022**

Deanery Synod Center Sessions/Parish Local Synod Sessions  
(Part II) Prayer & Discernment

**JAN. 18-25, 2022**

Synod Sessions with our Ecumenical Brothers and Sisters during Week of Christian Unity

**FEB. 22, 2022**

Deanery Synod Center Sessions and Parish Synod Sessions  
Reports Due

**APRIL 1, 2022**

Lay Associations , Special Ministries and Peripheries Reports Due

**MAY 31, 2022**

Diocesan Synod Team Submits 10-Page Report to Bishop Parkes

**JUNE 26, 2022**

Closing Mass of the Diocesan Phase of the Synod on Synodality.

**JUNE 30, 2022**

Bishop Parkes will submit the Diocesan Report to the USCCB

**OCTOBER, 2023**

Bishops from around the world gather in Rome for prayer, dialogue and discernment.





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## *Dialogue, Discussion and Discernment*

Dialogue is the foundation of all synodal consultations. Dialogue does not happen when there is arguing or diatribe. However, conflicting perspectives may be presented. We may not all agree upon what is discussed in the synodal consultation, but we all acknowledge that what we discern through this process has the potential to be the will of God for the Church in the future.

It is helpful to distinguish between the different types of exchanges:

- Dialogue is two way, cooperative, and its purpose is to build relationship and exchange perspectives between participants.
- Discussion is a process of talking about something in order to reach a decision or to exchange ideas.
- Debate is two way and competitive, where the purpose is to convince another.
- Diatribe is one way and its purpose is to browbeat, inspire, shame or emote.
- Dialogue comes before discussion in synodal exchanges. These two activities can lead to true discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying and leading.
- Dialogue expands possibilities and insight into possibilities
- Discussion holds those possibilities against one another, helping to reflect upon them, and narrowing toward realistic, doable solutions, and steps forward.



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## Living as a Synodal Church

The practice of living as a synodal Church means:

- **Communion** - The conversations lead to conversion to Christ and commitment to active participation in the mission given by Christ.
- **Participation** - The people of God talk with one another and listen to one another about questions that matter.
- **Mission** - The communion exists for a common purpose; mission flows naturally from the experience of communion.

## Synodal Requirements

- Addressing the basic questions together.
- Listening to the Holy Spirit.
- Remaining open to the perspectives of other people.
- Nurturing the fruits of the Holy Spirit over time.

## Ten Key Elements of Synodality

1. Being companions to one another on the journey.
2. Listening to the Holy Spirit and each other.
3. Speaking out.
4. Celebrating together.
5. Sharing responsibility for our common mission.
6. Creating opportunities for dialogue in the Church and wider society.
7. Participating in ecumenism.
8. Claiming one's proper authority and participation in the Church.
9. Discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit in the community and through shared decision-making.
10. Forming ourselves in synodality.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Parish Synod Session Agenda Overview

### Two-Part Synod Session Option

#### Part One: Evening of Prayer and Learning

(may also take place in the morning or afternoon)

*For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*

- I. Welcome/Introductions
- II. Opening Prayer
- III. Overview of the Synod Process
- IV. Communion: Catechesis on Synodality & Discernment
- V. Participation
  - a. Lectio Divina: Acts of the Apostle - Council of Jerusalem (Guided Meditation)
  - b. Discernment Questions for Reflection are Interwoven in the Lectio Divina
- VI. Mission

Participants will receive the discernment questions that will be shared in the small groups at the next session: Evening of Prayer and Discernment. Please bring these questions to prayer until the next session, at which time you will be asked to share your responses
- VII. Closing/Sending Forth Prayer



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Parish Synod Session Agenda Overview

### Two-Part Synod Session Option (Continued)

#### Part Two: Evening of Prayer and Discernment

(may also take place in the morning or afternoon)

*For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*

- I. Welcome/Introductions
- II. Opening Prayer
- III. Overview of the Synod Process
- IV. Welcome Video from Bishop Parkes
- V. Communion
  - a. Lectio Divina: Annunciation (Guided Meditation)
  - b. Discernment Questions for reflection are interwoven in the Lectio Divina
- VI. Participation
  - a. Participant Ground Rules
  - b. Break into Small Groups
    - Each person is asked to share with the small group their response to the discernment questions (each person will have a choice as to which question they chose to answer). If time allows, after everyone has had the opportunity to share, more questions may be answered.
    - The recorder will take notes to share the common themes/consensus from the group in the large assembly.
- VII. Mission
  - a. Large Assembly Sharing
    - As we journey together as a Synodal Church, what consensus or common thread emerged in regards to what we are doing well?
    - As we journey together as a Synodal Church, what consensus or common thread emerged in regards to what the Holy Spirit is leading the Church to do better?
      - The Synod Session recorder will take notes on common themes/threads to enter into the Synod Session Report
- VIII. Closing/Sending Forth Prayer

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Parish Synod Session Agenda Overview

### Combined Half-Day Synod Session Option

#### Prayer, Listening & Discernment Session

*For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*

- I. Welcome/Introductions
- II. Opening Prayer
- III. Overview of the Synod Process
- IV. Welcome Video from Bishop Parkes
- V. Communion: Catechesis of Synodality & Discernment
- Break
- VI. Participation
  - a. Lectio Divina (Guided Meditation)
    - Discernment Questions for Reflection are Interwoven in the Lectio Divina
  - b. Small Group Sharing
    - Participant Ground Rules
      - Break into Small Groups (Random Selection)
        - 4 to 6 per Group
      - Select a Table Facilitator to Guide the Session
        - Timer: Set Timer to Allow for All to Share
    - Each person is asked to share with the small group their response to the discernment questions (each person will have a choice as to which question they chose to answer). If time allows, after everyone has had the opportunity to share, more questions may be answered.
    - Recorder
      - The recorder will take notes to share the common themes/consensus from the group in the large assembly.

Break



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## Parish Synod Session Agenda Overview

### Combined Half-Day Synod Session Option (Continued)

#### Prayer, Listening & Discernment Session

For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.

#### VII. Mission

- a. Large Assembly Sharing
  - As we journey together as a Synodal Church, what consensus or common thread emerged in regards to what we are doing well?
  - As we journey together as a Synodal Church, what consensus or common thread emerged in regards to what the Holy Spirit is leading the Church to do better?
    - The recorder will take notes to share the common themes/consensus from the group in the assembly to provide in the Synod Session Report.

#### VIII. Closing/Sending Forth Prayer

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## Suggested Opening Prayer for the Parish Synod Session

**Leader:** Come, Holy Spirit

**R./** Fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

Leader: Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created

**R./** and you shall renew the face of the earth.

Leader: O God, who by the Light of the Holy Spirit instructed the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Spirit we may know what is right and always rejoice in his consolation, through Christ our Lord.

**R./ Amen.**

### Psalm 100

Leader: Shout joyfully to the Lord, serve the Lord with Gladness

**R./ Shout joyfully to the Lord, serve the Lord with Gladness**

Leader: Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Serve the Lord with gladness

Come before Him, sing for joy.

**R./ Shout joyfully to the Lord, serve the Lord with Gladness**

Leader: Know that he, the Lord, is God.

He made us, we belong to him,

We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

**R./ Shout joyfully to the Lord, serve the Lord with Gladness**

Leader: Go within his gates, giving thanks.

Enter his courts with songs of praise.

Give thanks to him and bless his name.

**R./ Shout joyfully to the Lord, serve the Lord with Gladness**

Leader: We make our prayer complete and perfect by praying the synod prayer.

### 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.



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## *Suggested Sending Forth Prayer for the Parish Synod Session*

Leader: O Lord, ruler and guardian of your Church,  
pour out, we pray, upon your servants  
a spirit of truth, understanding and peace,  
that they may strive with all their heart  
to know what is pleasing to you  
and then pursue it with all their strength.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Or together recite the Prayer of the Synod.

### **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.





# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## *Parish Synod Session Small Group Questions*

1. Who is journeying with you in your spiritual life. Who doesn't have this accompaniment? Who appears to you to be alone on the journey?
2. Do you feel heard or listened to in the Church? What enables or hinders you in speaking up?
3. How is the Holy Spirit working through your parish to draw people to Christ? What opportunities have we missed?
4. How have your experiences with Catholics different from you in opinion, spirituality, or lifestyle aided you in your faith or challenged you in your faith?
5. How is the Holy Spirit drawing us all closer together in communion, participation, and mission? Where is the Holy Spirit leading the Church?

## *Parish Synod Session Large Assembly Question*

1. What consensus or common thread emerged in regards to what we are doing well?
2. What consensus or common thread emerged in regards to what the Holy Spirit is leading the Church to do better?



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Facilitator's Detailed Session Outline

### *Two-Part Option - Part One Prayer & Learning*

Below, the facilitator will find a detailed outline for the two-part Synod Session. Regular font indicates directional information. Italicized font indicates a script for the facilitator to follow. **BOLD** indicates the agenda heading. Items in brackets [ ] suggests who will lead that particular section

The role of the facilitator is to track the time devoted to each section, provide time updates (e.g., “You have five more minutes for this”) and move the group through the conversations in the time allotted. The Facilitator serves as the Master of Ceremonies (MC) and may introduce the Spiritual Leader (if the parish or deanery has one) who will lead prayer and/or provide catechesis on synodality and discernment. If the parish/deanery chooses to use a video (i.e., the Bishop Parkes Video Introduction or a Catechesis video), the facilitator will introduce the video.

PART 1: Evening of Prayer & Learning (may also take place in the morning or afternoon)  
[Anticipated time: 1 hour without a break]

*For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.*

**Hospitality** Please offer light hospitality and greet people as they arrive.

**Welcome/Introductions** (2 minutes) [**Facilitator**] Begin on time introducing the session, welcoming participants; introducing yourself to the participants and inviting participants to introduce themselves to their fellow group members seated at their table. Be sure to have the pastor and any other parish or deanery clergy, religious or parish staff introduce themselves.

**Opening Prayer** (5 minutes) [**Spiritual Leader**] Have the Spiritual Leader, pastor or facilitator lead the opening prayer (see Opening Prayer Service on page 14 of the Facilitator Guide).



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Facilitator's Detailed Session Outline

### Two-Part Option - Part One Prayer & Learning (Continued)

**Overview of the Synod Process** (3 minutes) [**Facilitator**] Following the opening prayer say:  
*The Synod process involves active listening. Listening is at the heart of our conversation today.*

*As you arrived today, each person received a participant's guide. Open the participant guide to the outline for today's gathering on page 10. Throughout this process, the guide, which includes a History of Synod in the Church, and What is Synodality, serves as an aid in facilitating our small group discussion. Take a moment to review today's agenda.*

*Pope Francis has called the entire People of God to journey together! We gather to listen, dialogue, and pray so that we can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. The "goal" of this journeying together is not to create a new vision or pastoral plan with objectives. Rather, the goal of our journeying together is to be present with one another, to listen and learn, and to grow closer to the Lord and his Church.*

#### **Communion** (20 minutes) [**SPIRITUAL LEADER**]

*As we prepare to enter into prayer, listening and discernment, we would like to take some time to form ourselves with the Church's understanding of Synodality and Discernment.*

An outline of talking points for the Catechesis of Synodality and Discernment is available in Appendix 8 (pages 46-49 of this guide).

#### **Participation** [**FACILITATOR**]

*It is now time to enter into prayerful reflection. One prayer form we will use this evening is the Lectio Divina. It is a guided meditation on scripture and/or church teaching, with pauses to reflect on questions. These questions, at this point, are to be meditated upon internally (you will not be sharing your answers out loud) and are to be used to open us up to the voice and guidance of the Spirit.*

#### **Lectio Divina (Guided Meditation)** [**SPIRITUAL LEADER**] (20 minutes)

During this first session on Prayer & Learning, our guided meditation centers on the Council of Jerusalem found in the Acts of the Apostles. The Lectio Divina may be found in Appendix 2 on pages 35-38 of the Facilitator's Guide.

The discernment questions interwoven in the Lectio Divina are for internal reflection in order to prepare ourselves for our deeper discussion on where the Holy Spirit is leading the Church.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Facilitator's Detailed Session Outline

### Two-Part Option - Part One Prayer & Learning (Continued)

#### **Mission [FACILITATOR]** (5 minutes)

Please distribute the discernment questions to the participants. These discernment questions will be discussed in small groups at the next Synod session (Part II). Participants are asked to pray and reflect over them in the interim. The handout of questions for distribution are available in Appendix 4 of the Facilitator's Guide on page 42 and Parish Empowerment Toolkit, page 62.

*I would like to thank you all for praying, listening, and discerning to where the Holy Spirit is leading us. Discerning the will of God and carrying out the mission of the Church in accord with Church teaching requires time for prayer and an openness to the Spirit speaking through personal reflection and group discussion.*

*Communal discernment in its best and purest form is the articulation of a contemplative insight into the working of God's grace in a faith community. Community discernment should be an ongoing process. The actual time it takes to discern may require days, weeks, months or even years of prayer, study and listening. To be a discerning community, then, is to be a community of prayer.*

*We invite you back our next session on Prayer & Discernment of our Synod Process on \_\_\_\_\_ located at \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (a.m./p.m.). During our next session, we will pray and discern where the Holy Spirit continues to guide us. You will have the opportunity to share your insights and reflections. To prepare, we are providing you with a set of reflection questions to pray over until we meet again.*



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## Facilitator's Detailed Session Outline Two-Part Option - Part One Prayer & Learning

### **Closing & Sending Prayer** (2 minutes)

[If available] *Our Spiritual Leader will now give us a blessing, a prayer found in the Mass for Synods.*

Leader: O Lord, ruler and guardian of your Church,  
pour out, we pray, upon your servants  
a spirit of truth, understanding and peace,  
that they may strive with all their heart  
to know what is pleasing to you  
and then pursue it with all their strength.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Or together recite the Prayer of the Synod.

### **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.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Facilitator's Detailed Session Outline

### Two-Part Option - Part Two Prayer & Discernment

**Part Two: Evening of Prayer & Discernment (may also take place in the morning or afternoon) [Anticipated time: 1.5 hours ]**

**For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.**

**Hospitality** Please offer light hospitality and greet people as they arrive.

**Welcome/Introductions (2 minutes) [Facilitator]** Please begin on time introducing the session, welcoming back participants from the previous Prayer & Learning Synod session and welcoming any new participants. Introduce yourself to the participants and inviting participants to introduce themselves to their fellow group members seated at their table. Be sure to have the pastor and any other parish or deanery clergy, religious or parish staff introduce themselves.

**Opening Prayer (5 minutes) [Spiritual Leader]** Have the Spiritual Leader, pastor or facilitator lead the opening prayer (see Opening Prayer Service on page 14 of the Facilitator toolkit).

**Overview of the Synod Process (3 minutes) [Facilitator]** Following the opening prayer say:  
*The Synod process involves active listening. Listening is at the heart of our conversation today. Later in this process will go over the Participant Ground Rules for Listening and Sharing found on page xx of the Participant's Guide. Remember to give your full attention to each other and listening to the voice of God in your hearts. Listen for understanding by taking to heart what other people share. As we share, individuals will speak, one at a time, without interruption while others listen. Everyone will have a chance to speak and, if you like, you may choose to pass.*

*As you arrived today, each person received a participant's guide. Open the participant guide to the outline for today's gathering on page 11. Throughout this process, the guide, which includes a History of Synod in the Church, and What is Synodality, serves as an aid in facilitating our small group discussion. Take a moment to review today's agenda.*

*In our last session we spent time learning about the Church's model of governance: the synod process and discernment. We actively prayed to open our hearts and minds to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Many of you had time to reflect on the questions we will discuss tonight.*

*Our process tonight will involve again going to the Word of God and meditating on where the Spirit is leading His Church. We will then break into small groups in order to listen to one another's insights and reflections and share our own. We will then come back as a large group to listen for the common threads and consensus found within our small groups. From there we will take your input and develop a parish report which will contribute to the creation of our diocesan synthesis report.*

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Facilitator's Detailed Session Outline

### Two-Part Option - Part Two Prayer & Discernment (Continued)

#### Overview of the Synod Process (3 minutes) [Facilitator] (Continued)

Pope Francis has called the entire People of God to journey together! We gather to listen, dialogue, and pray so that we can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. The “goal” of this journeying together is not to create a new vision or pastoral plan with objectives. Rather, the goal of our journeying together is to be present with one another, to listen and learn with each other, and to grow closer to the Lord and his Church.

#### Welcome Video from Bishop Parkes [VIDEO – if no video is available you may skip this item]

*At this time, we wish to share a few words of welcome from Bishop Parkes. Please focus your attention on the screen.*

#### Participation [FACILITATOR]

*It is now time to enter into prayerful reflection. One prayer form we will use this evening is the Lectio Divina. It is a guided meditation on scripture and/or Church teaching, with pauses to reflect on questions. These questions are for internal reflection and are to be used to open us up to the voice and guidance of the Spirit.*

#### Lectio Divina (Guided Meditation) [SPIRITUAL LEADER] (25 minutes)

During this first session on Prayer & Learning, our guided meditation centers on the Annunciation. The Lectio Divina may be found in Appendix 2 on pages 35-38 of the Facilitator’s Guide.

The discernment questions interwoven in the Lectio Divina and are for internal reflection in order to prepare ourselves for our deeper discussion on where the Holy Spirit is leading the Church.

#### Small Group Sharing (45 minutes)

#### Participant Ground Rules [FACILITATOR]

*As we begin the Small Group Sharing process, it’s important to remember the Synod process involves active listening. Listening is at the heart of our conversation today. You will find the Participant Ground Rules for Listening and Sharing on page 29 of the Participant’s Guide. Remember to give your full attention to each other and listen to the voice of God in your heart. Listen for understanding by taking to heart what other people share. As we share. Individuals will speak, one at a time, without interruption while others listen. Everyone will have a chance to speak or, if you like, you may choose to pass.*

The recorder will take notes to share the common themes/consensus from the group in the larger assembly.

*Each small group will have a notetaker/recorder (or is to designate a notetaker; take a moment to select a member of the group to serve as a “recorder” for your group discussion.) There is a packet for the recorder at each table to assist in taking notes during the sharing.*

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Facilitator's Detailed Session Outline

### Two-Part Option - Part Two Prayer & Discernment (Continued)

Participant Ground Rules [FACILITATOR] (Continued)

It is highly recommended that you designate table facilitators prior to the beginning of the Synod session. If you have not yet done so, please take a moment to designate a facilitator at each table. Facilitators will guide the table session, enable each person to select and answer one question, and monitor the time.

If the participants haven't done so already, please break into small groups (random breaking), 4 to 6 per group. The Synod facilitator should ensure a time is set to ensure everyone is on pace.

**Timer: Set a timer to keep the discussion on track and within the time frame. Let the groups know when there is 10 minutes left so they can wrap up sharing and focus on large assembly questions.**

Each person is asked to share with the small group their response to one of the discernment questions (each person will have a choice as to which question they desire to answer). If time allows, after everyone has had the opportunity to share once, more questions may be answered. Five questions for sharing are available on pages 17-21 of the Participant's Guide.

*One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person per question. I will provide a time check periodically throughout this section.*

The table recorder is asked to write down what they heard pertaining to each question answered in the small group. At the end of the session, the table recorders are to turn their notes into the Synod session recorders.

**Break (10 minutes)**



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Facilitator's Detailed Session Outline

### Two-Part Option - Part Two Prayer & Discernment (Continued)

**Mission [FACILITATOR]** (30 minutes)

#### **Larger Assembly Sharing**

Just as you heard one another in your small group, we now would like to hear collectively the common thread or consensus that emerged from your group. The recorder or table facilitator is invited to answer these two questions with the large assembly. Please take no more than 90 seconds per question. The answers should be based on what was heard during the small group sharing.

- As we journey together as a Synodal Church, what consensus or common thread emerged in regards to what we are doing well?
- As we journey together as a Synodal Church, what consensus or common thread emerged in regards to what the Holy Spirit is leading the Church to do better?

The Synod Session recorder(s) has a three-fold responsibility. 1) Record the answers of the two questions above from each small group; 2) Review the written responses of each small group; 3) with the Synod Session facilitator, prepare the notes for the parish report. Please review the position responsibilities found on page 1 of the Recorder's Guide.

#### **Closing & Sending Prayer** (2 minutes)

*On behalf of Bishop Parkes, I would like to thank you for sharing and listening. Recorders should bring their documentation to the front of the room. Thank you all who participated in our Synod sessions. The recorded comments from the groups will be compiled into a parish report which will contribute to the creation of our diocesan synthesis report. Thank you and God Bless.*

[If available] *Our Spiritual Leader will now give us a blessing, a prayer found in the Mass for Synods.*

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Facilitator's Detailed Session Outline

### Two-Part Option - Part Two Prayer & Discernment

Closing & Sending Prayer (2 minutes) (Continued)

Leader: O Lord, ruler and guardian of your Church,  
pour out, we pray, upon your servants  
a spirit of truth, understanding and peace,  
that they may strive with all their heart  
to know what is pleasing to you  
and then pursue it with all their strength.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Or together recite the Prayer of the Synod.

#### **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.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Facilitator's Detailed Session Outline Combined Half-Day Option

Below, the facilitator will find a detailed outline for a Half-day (approximately 3 hours) combined Prayer, Learning & Discernment Session. Regular font indicates directional information. Italicized font indicates a script for the facilitator to follow. **BOLD** indicates the agenda heading. Items in brackets [ ] suggests who will lead that particular section

The role of the facilitator is to track the time devoted to each section, provide time updates (e.g., “You have five more minutes for this”) and move the group through the conversations in the time allotted. The Facilitator serves as the Master of Ceremonies (MC) and may introduce the Spiritual Leader (if the parish or deanery has one) who will lead prayer and/or provide catechesis on synodality and discernment. If the parish/deanery chooses to use a video (i.e., the Bishop Parkes Video Introduction or a Catechesis video), the facilitator will introduce the video.

**Hospitality** (10 minutes prior to the session)

**Welcome/Introductions** (2 minutes) [**Facilitator**] Begin on time introducing the session, welcoming participants; introducing yourself to the participants and inviting participants to introduce themselves to their fellow group members seated at their table. Be sure to have the pastor and any other parish or deanery clergy, religious or parish staff introduce themselves.

**Opening Prayer** (5 minutes) [**Spiritual Leader**] Have the Spiritual Leader, pastor or facilitator lead the opening prayer (see Opening Prayer Service on page 14 of the Facilitator's Guide).

**Overview of the Synod Process** (3 minutes) [**Facilitator**] Following the opening prayer say:  
*The Synod process involves active listening. Listening is at the heart of our conversation today. Later in this process will go over the Participant Ground Rules for Listening and Sharing found on page xx of the Participant's Guide. Remember to give your full attention to each other and listening to the voice of God in your hearts. Listen for understanding by taking to heart what other people share. As we share, individuals will speak, one at a time, without interruption while others listen. Everyone will have a chance to speak and if you like, you may choose to pass.*

*As you arrived today, each person received a participant's guide. Open the participant guide to the outline for today's gathering on pages 12-13. Throughout this process, the guide, which includes a History of Synod in the Church, and What is Synodality, serves as an aid in facilitating our small group discussion. Take a moment to review today's agenda.*

*Pope Francis has called the entire People of God to journey together! We gather to listen, dialogue, and pray so that we can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. The “goal” of this journeying together is not to create a new vision or pastoral plan with objectives. Rather, the goal of our journeying together is to be present with one another, to listen and learn with each other, and to grow closer to the Lord and his Church.*

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## **Facilitator's Detailed Session Outline Combined Half-Day Option** (Continued)

**Welcome Video from Bishop Parkes** [VIDEO – if no video is available you may skip this item]

*At this time, we wish to share a few words of welcome from Bishop Parkes. Please focus your attention on the screen.*

**Communion** (30 minutes) [**SPIRITUAL LEADER**]

*As we prepare to enter into prayer, listening and discernment, we would like to take some time to form ourselves with the Church's understanding of Synodality and Discernment*

An outline of talking points for the Catechesis of Synodality and Discernment is available in Appendix 8 (pages 46-49 of the Facilitator's Guide).

**BREAK** (15 minutes)

**Participation** [**FACILITATOR**]

*It is now time to enter into prayerful reflection. One prayer form we will use this evening is the Lectio Divina. It is a guided meditation on scripture and/or church teaching, with pauses to reflect on questions. These questions, at this point, are to be meditated upon internally (you will not be sharing your answers out loud).*

**Lectio Divina (Guided Meditation)** [**SPIRITUAL LEADER**] (30 minutes)

There are two possible versions of the Lectio Divina, one reflecting on the Annunciation, and the second on the Acts of the Apostles (Council of Jerusalem) & Gaudium et Spes. You may choose either one. The discernment questions are essentially the same. These versions are found in Appendix 2 on pages 35-38 of the Facilitator's Guide.

**Small Group Sharing** (45 minutes)

**Participant Ground Rules** [**FACILITATOR**]

*As we begin the Small Group Sharing process, it's important to remember the Synod process involves active listening. Listening is at the heart of our conversation today. You will find the Participant Ground Rules for Listening and Sharing on page 29 of the Participant's Guide. Remember to give your full attention to each other and listen to the voice of God in your hearts. Listen for understanding by taking to heart what other people share. Individuals will speak, one at a time, without interruption while others listen. Everyone will have a chance to speak and if you like, you may choose to pass.*

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## *Facilitator's Detailed Session Outline Combined Half-Day Option* (Continued)

The recorder will take notes to share the common themes/consensus from the group in the larger assembly.

*Each small group will have a notetaker/recorder (or is to designate a notetaker; take a moment to select a member of the group to serve as a “recorder” for your group discussion.) There is a packet for the recorder at each table to assist in taking notes during the sharing.*

It is highly recommended you designate table facilitators prior to the beginning of the Synod Session. If you have not yet done so, please take a moment to designate a facilitator at each table who will guide the table session and will enable each person to select and answer one question, as well as monitor the time.

If the participants haven't done so already, please break into small groups (random breaking), 4 to 6 per group. The Synod Facilitator should ensure a time is set to ensure everyone is on pace.

**Timer: Set a timer to keep the discussion on track and within the time frame. Let the groups know when there is 10 minutes left so they can wrap up sharing and focus on large assembly questions.**

Each person is asked to share with the small group the answer to one of the discernment questions (each person will have a choice as to which question they desire to answer). If time allows, more questions may be answered, as long as everyone has the opportunity to share. Five questions for sharing are available on page 17-21 of the Participant's Guide.

*One person speaks at a time, without interruption, as others listen. Please keep your responses to 1-2 minutes per person per question. I will provide a time check periodically throughout this section.*

The table recorder is asked to write down what they heard pertaining to each question answered in the small group. At the end of the session, the table recorders are to turn their recordings into the Synod session recorders.

**Break** (10 minutes)

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## *Facilitator's Detailed Session Outline Combined Half-Day Option* (Continued)

**Mission [FACILITATOR]** (30 minutes)

### **Large Assembly Sharing**

Just as you heard one another in your small group, we now would like to hear collectively the common thread or consensus that emerged from your group. The recorder or table facilitator is invited to answer these two questions with the larger assembly. Please take no more than 90 seconds per question. The answers should be based on what was heard during the small group sharing.

- As we journey together as a Synodal Church, what consensus or common thread emerged in regards to what we are doing well?
- As we journey together as a Synodal Church, what consensus or common thread emerged in regards to what the Holy Spirit is leading the Church to do better?

The Synod Session recorder(s) has a three-fold responsibility. 1) Record the answers of the two questions above from each small group; 2) Review the written responses of each small group; 3) with the Synod Session facilitator, prepare the notes for the parish report. Please review the position responsibilities found on page 1 of the Recorder's Guide.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## *Facilitator's Detailed Session Outline Combined Half-Day Option* (Continued)

### **Closing & Sending Prayer** (2 minutes)

On behalf of Bishop Parkes, I would like to thank you for sharing and listening. Recorders should bring their documentation to the front of the room. Thank you all who participated in our Synod sessions. The recorded comments from the groups will be compiled into a parish report which will contribute to the creation of our diocesan synthesis report. Thank you and God Bless.

[If available] Our Spiritual Leader will now give us a blessing, a prayer found in the Mass for Synods.

Leader: O Lord, ruler and guardian of your Church,  
pour out, we pray, upon your servants  
a spirit of truth, understanding and peace,  
that they may strive with all their heart  
to know what is pleasing to you  
and then pursue it with all their strength.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Or together recite the Prayer of the Synod.

### **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.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Planning a Local Synod Session

### Determine the Location

The space should be appropriate for the number of people who will be attending. There should be tables and chairs for small group conversations. A podium should be placed at the front of the room. A good sound system with audio/visual capabilities is essential.

### Choose a Date

Find a time that is convenient for various audiences, keeping in mind work and school schedules of families and individuals.

### Choose a Format

Synod Sessions can be held as a two-part session or one. *(See sample agendas on pages 9-12 of the Parish Empowerment Toolkit.)*







## CHECKLIST FOR PASTORS/PARISHES

### **First “Vista Point” on our Journey Together (Base Effort)**

- Pray the Synod Prayer as a faith community. Prayer resources and PowerPoint slides of the prayer are available on the Diocesan website: <https://www.dosp.org/synod/>
- Encourage your parishioners and those you minister to on the peripheries to attend a local Synod Session (in your deanery): The Evening of Prayer & Learning during Advent and the Evening of Prayer & Discernment (hosted in January or February).

### **Second “Vista Point” on our Journey Together (Increased Parish Effort)**

- Pray the Synod Prayer as a faith community. Prayer resources and PowerPoint slides of the prayer are available on the Diocesan website: <https://www.dosp.org/synod/>
- Send a delegation to the Parish Empowerment Sessions (In English: Nov. 8, 9 or 10, In Spanish: Dec. 4).
- Designate someone in the parish to coordinate, another to facilitate and another to record responses. These three individuals are asked to attend the Parish Empowerment Sessions (In English: Nov. 8, 9 or 10, In Spanish: Dec. 4).
- Host an Evening of Prayer & Learning during Advent and the Evening of Prayer & Discernment (hosted between January 1 and February 15) for your parish leaders and/or parishioners, and/or Lay Movements and Associations (i.e., Cursillo, Juan XXIII, Catholic Charismatic Renewal, etc.).

- Summit of one-to-two-page synthesis of input received from the Synod Sessions (Guidance provided within the toolkit.) The report is to be reviewed and signed by the Pastor no later than **Tuesday, February 22, 2022** (The Feast of the Chair of St. Peter).

### **Third “Vista Point” on our Journey Together (Extraordinary Parish Effort)**

- Pray the Synod Prayer as a faith community. Prayer resources and PowerPoint slides of the prayer are available on the Diocesan website: <https://www.dosp.org/synod/>  
Send a delegation to the Parish Empowerment Sessions (In English: Nov. 8, 9 or 10, In Spanish: Dec. 4).

- Offer to be a Deanery Synod Center by inviting others in your deanery to attend your parish's Evening of Prayer & Learning during Advent OR the Evening of Prayer & Discernment. Notify your Dean no later than Sunday, November 14 of your parish's willingness to host one of two-part Deanery Synod Sessions.
- Host an Evening of Prayer & Learning during Advent and the Evening of Prayer & Discernment (hosted between January 1 and February 15) for your parish leaders and/or parishioners and/or Lay Movements and Associations (i.e., Cursillo, Juan XXIII, Catholic Charismatic Renewal, etc.).
- Host a combined half-day of prayer, listening and discernment to those on the peripheries within your parish or deanery. Agenda on the Diocesan Synod website; [www.dosp.org/synod](http://www.dosp.org/synod).

(Not an exhaustive list, but here are some ideas... feel free to add):

- \* Those who are absent or inactive from Church
- \* Ecumenical Gathering/Associations
- \* The Homeless

- Host either the two-part prayer, learning & discernment evenings or a combined half-day of prayer, listening & discernment to those in lay movements or other special ministries within your parish or school. Agenda provided within this toolkit or at the Diocesan Synod website; [www.dosp.org/synod](http://www.dosp.org/synod).

(Not an exhaustive list, but here are some ideas... feel free to add):

- Cursillo Movement
- School parents/families
- Young Marrieds
- Juan XXIII Movement
- College-age young adults
- Singles
- Catholic Charismatic Renewal
- Junior High Students
- Those in Senior Living Centers
- Senior High Students
- The Greatest Generation (born 1901 to 1927) The Silent Generation (born 1928 to 1945) Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964) Generation X (born 1965 to 1980) Millennials (born 1981 to 1996) Generation Z (born 1997 to present) Generation Alpha (starting in the 2010s)
- Cultural faith communities
  - \* African Catholics
  - \* Hispanic Catholics
  - \* Nigerian Catholics
  - \* Black Catholics
  - \* Italian Catholics
  - \* Polish Catholics
  - \* Brazilian Catholics
  - \* Indonesian Catholics
  - \* Tongan Catholics
  - \* Filipino Catholics
  - \* Korean Catholics
  - \* Traditional Latin Mass
  - \* Haitian Catholics
  - \* Native Americans
  - \* Vietnamese Catholics

- Summit of one-to-two-page synthesis of input received from the Synod Sessions. (Guidance provided.) The report is to be reviewed and signed by the Pastor and returned to the Diocesan Synod Team no later than Friday, April 1, 2022 for the special ministries, Lay Associations & synod to the Peripheries.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Creating the Local Synod Team

A variety of tasks are needed to implement a local Synod Session. Forming a team is a way to share responsibilities and invite others to be a part of this historic and meaningful process. It is best to choose individuals who are at home with their Catholic faith, are prayerful and reflective, have strong interpersonal skills, have effective communication skills and are willing participants in the synodal process. The following positions are recommended for your Synod Team.

**Session Coordinator:** Plan logistics, venue, registration and event details.

**Lead Facilitator:** Serve as large group facilitator and organize table facilitators  
(*Training information is found on pages 34-36 of the Parish Empowerment Toolkit.*)

**Lead Recorder:** Serve as large group recorder and organize table recorders.  
(*Training information is found on page 37 of the Parish Empowerment Toolkit.*)

**Spiritual Leader:** Provide catechesis on the Synod and leads prayer.  
(*Catechetical resources are found on pages 58-61 of the Parish Empowerment Toolkit.*)

**Public Relations Coordinator:** Promote Synod Sessions and organize publicity.  
(*Promotional resources are found on pages 64-67 of the Parish Empowerment Toolkit.*)

**Volunteer Coordinator:** Recruit and trains individuals that are needed for all tasks.

**Hospitality Coordinator:** Plan for a welcoming experience.  
(*Hospitality tips are found on page 63 of the Parish Empowerment Toolkit.*)



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Who Can Facilitate?

Good facilitation has participants engaging with one another in meaningful dialogue on the given topic or question. The facilitator is not the center of conversation but rather a guide for the conversation. It is important to select and train excellent facilitators for this listening process. Strong facilitators are people who:

- Are able to maintain a “big picture” view without injecting their personal agenda
- Can focus a conversation
- Can connect participants with each other without becoming the center of the conversation.

It is important to select facilitators with the experience and competencies needed, depending on the nature and makeup of the group.

- Volunteers can usually facilitate parish, diocesan, religious order, movements, or similar synodal consultations
- A Catholic professional facilitator – or someone else with higher level facilitation skills – may be needed on occasion when participants come from marginalized groups (e.g., different ethnic or cultural groups, abuse survivors, youth, LGBTQ, persons with disabilities, migrants/refugees, etc.) or when special interest groups are participating in a particular consultation
- All facilitators need preparation and training on the synodal approach, the synodal purpose, and the synodal process. (*Training information is found on pages 34-36.*)

## How to Facilitate?

As facilitator you will be asked to:

- Establish clear boundaries of time and topic for speakers
- Gently interrupt a speaker who talks disproportionately more than others
- Gently interrupt and redirect a speaker who gets off topic
- Gently re-focus a speaker who is preoccupied with an issue that is not pertinent to the topic or inhibits the participation of others in the group.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## *Practical Suggestions for Successful Facilitation*

It helps to set ground rules and expectations at the start of the consultation by emphasizing the need for broad participation and safety. Some examples of boundary-related ground rules are:

- One person speaks at a time and the others listen attentively.
- Discernment means speaking, listening and prayerfully reflecting. Allow for a brief pause between speakers to consider what has been said.
- Speak when you can add to the conversation, not when you are trying to intentionally end it.
- Stay on topic.
- Keep your comments reasonably brief so others have time to participate.
- This is a forward-leaning conversation, so lean toward solutions.
- If someone offers a comment in the form of a complaint, ask the person to reframe her/his comment in the form of a hope or aspiration.
- If you have to interrupt a speaker, it helps to acknowledge their contribution by providing a brief synthesis of what you heard them say and thank them for their contribution.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## *Practical Suggestions for Facilitators to Encourage Dialogue, Discernment, and Discussion*

As facilitator, you will help the group engage in dialogue on the topic until they make an explicit decision to move into discussion. It is okay for you as facilitator to ask the group to stop talking for a short period of time in order to reflect and pray about the dialogue before moving to discussion.

- Create a safe and welcoming atmosphere. Remind participants that they are there to listen to each other, not to persuade each other.
- Everyone should have a chance to speak but no one should be forced to speak.
- Enforce ground rules to allow for a respectful exchange.
- Strive to engender a spirit of prayerful discernment among group members by calling on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Allow for moments of silence to give everyone an opportunity to gather their thoughts before speaking
- Ask participants to speak from their personal experience. No one should attempt to represent or defend any particular group or culture.
- Allow participants to express both uncertainties as well as deeply held beliefs. Sometimes we come to better understand our own position when we are given the opportunity to talk through it
- When clarity is needed, repeat back to participants the essence of what you hear them saying.
- Listen for underlying personal values and aspirations and acknowledge them.
- Synthesize comments from time to time when the conversation reaches a lull.
- Notice common themes that emerge from the conversation, especially those that relate to the themes of the Synod: approaches for increase communion with one another, ways to participate more fully in the life of the Church and ideas for living as Missionary Disciples
- Ask group members to comment on what ideas or topics that they believe the local and/or universal Church should focus on moving forward.
- Name unresolved issues or topics.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## How to Record a Local Synod Session

Recommendations:

- One recorder for each of the small groups
- Two recorders for large group

Standard form to include: (*Recording Forms are found on pages 48-54 of the Parish Empowerment Toolkit.*)

- Date and location of session
- Names of recorders
- Questions to be answered in small group sessions
- Questions to be answered in large group sessions

Included under each question during large group session:

- Summary or theme of each response
- “Tick” marks next to each response corresponding to number of times the theme was mentioned, if subsequent participants made similar remarks
- Comments to be typed and organized by themes, if possible
- Bullet points would be easiest to follow

Additional guidelines:

- Both recorders will confer after the session to compare notes.
- If possible, comments made in Spanish or other languages are to be translated into English prior to submission.
- The notes will then be presented to the pastor or host of the site, who will then prepare a summary report to be sent to the Synod committee via e-mail: [journey@dosp.org](mailto:journey@dosp.org).
- Synod committee will review responses and common themes after the discernment sessions, providing summaries from which the Diocesan Synod Team will be able to craft the Diocesan summary for review by Bishop Parkes, who will ensure that the document is sent to the USCCB by June 30, 2022.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## After the Synodal Consultation

### Reporting the Fruits of Your Synodal Consultations

Reporting is both horizontal – reporting to the participants, pastoral councils, staff, faith community – and vertical – reporting to the Diocese, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Holy Father and the Synod of Bishops. It would be helpful if the local Synod Team (Synod Coordinator, Synod Facilitator, Synod Spiritual Leader and Synod Recorder) could work together to develop the Parish/Deanery Synod Report.

The diocesan Synod Team will develop a 10-page report from all submissions for the Bishop's review. Bishop Parkes will then submit the diocesan report to the USCCB.

A team from the USCCB will develop a country report (comprised of all the dioceses in the United States) for the Continental Phase of the Synod Process. The Bishops' Conferences of the USA and Canada will then develop a combined report for the Synod of Bishops for the development of their world-wide report.

The seeds of the Holy Spirit that come from one voice in our local community will be joined with other voices throughout the world to assist the Church in discerning its calling from God into the third millennium.

### How to Develop a Deanery/Parish Synod Report

1. Review the recorder's notes and find common themes and consensus.
2. Use the diocesan Parish/Deanery Synod Report Form to provide the results of the Synod consultation, focusing on common themes and consensus. The Form will be available for download from the diocesan Synod website: [www.dosp.org/synod](http://www.dosp.org/synod)
3. The Parish/Deanery Synod Report is to be reviewed and signed by the Pastor/Dean and submitted to [Journey@dosp.org](mailto:Journey@dosp.org).
4. The Parish/Deanery Synod Report Form for parish consultations is due to the Diocese of St. Petersburg by **Tuesday, February 22, 2022** (The Feast of the Chair of St. Peter).
5. The Parish/Deanery Synod Report Form for Lay Associations of the Faithful and periphery groups is due by **Friday, April 1, 2022**.





# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix I

### Prayer for the Synod - Adsumus Sancte Spiritus

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,  
as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us,  
make Yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go  
and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;  
do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance  
lead us down the wrong path  
nor partiality influence our actions.  
Let us find in You our unity so that we  
may journey together to eternal life  
and not stray from the way of truth  
and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work  
in every place and time, in the  
communion of the Father and the Son,  
forever and ever.

Amen.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 2

### Lectio Divina - The Annunciation

LUKE 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

**26-27: In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.**

*The Most Holy Trinity sent Gabriel in a specific time, to a specific place, to a specific woman. Do I believe that the Lord works in the same way today, that God wants to speak to me in this time, in this place? Where do I see God working in my life? Where am I on my spiritual journey?*

**28-29: And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.**

*The Lord is with me! How often do I recognize this truth? Does this surprise me? God accompanies me. And God sends others to accompany me too. Whom has He sent to me? Who journeys with me in my spiritual life?*



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 2

### *Lectio Divina - The Annunciation* (Continued)

**30-33:** The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

*Do not be afraid, God says to Mary, and to us as well. Jesus, the Son of God, comes to dwell with his people. Through Him comes to us the Kingdom of God, the reign of God, in the midst of His Church. Do I see Him coming to me in love through the ministry of His Church? How often and how well is the Church present in my own journey of faith?*

**34-37:** Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.”

*Mary questions the Angel in faith, with a heart that seeks to understand. And in answer to her questioning is revealed the mystery of Christ’s Incarnation. And not only a mystery, but an immediate and concrete sign too. In answer to her questioning, God shows that nothing is impossible with Him. Let each of us consider: When have I raised a question in the community of the Church? When was my voice heard? What did my questioning contribute? What did God do with it?*

**38:** Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

*Let each of us spend a moment in silence, in interior silence, to consider the profundity of Mary’s answer, the simple love and deep relationship that it reflects, her love and trust in God. Her vocation and her response affect not only her but all the world.*



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 2

### *Lectio Divina - The Council of Jerusalem*

ACTS 15:1-11

Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, “It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.”

The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

**1-5: Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, “It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.”**



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 2

### Lectio Divina - The Council of Jerusalem (Continued)

*In this passage we see a dispute arise in the early Church. Rather than seeing these question as a roadblock, Paul and Barnabas recognize the path that the Lord has opened before them, and they choose to follow. As a result, they make their way towards Jerusalem. These early disciples recognized that God is at work in the Church just as we are called to do today. Where do I see God working in my life? Where am I on my spiritual journey? Who is on the journey with me?*

**6-11: The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”**

*“The apostles and elders met together.” This path that the Lord opens before us is not one we are called to journey alone. Confronted by the experiences and questions of the community, the apostles and elders recognize that these experiences and questions are theirs, too. This helps them to recognize their shared need for Christ: “we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.” Let us consider this journey the early Church makes together. How often and how well is the Church present in my journey of faith? When have I spoken up and questioned in the midst of the Church? What did it contribute to the church community?*

*Let us close our reflection by listening to the words that begin the Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world, Gaudium et Spes, followed by a few moments of interior silence.*

**The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Gaudium et Spes, 1.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 3

### 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.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 3

### 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.”
- 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.”



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 3

### 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.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 4

### Forms - Recording Forms

#### Synodal Conversations Recorder Notes Small Group Sharing

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1

Who is journeying with you in your spiritual life. Who doesn't have this accompaniment? Who appears to you to be alone on the journey?

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# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 4

### Forms - Recording Forms

#### Synodal Conversations Recorder Notes

#### Small Group Sharing

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2 Do you feel heard or listened to in the Church? What enables or hinders you in speaking up?

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# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 4

### Forms - Recording Forms

#### Synodal Conversations Recorder Notes Small Group Sharing

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

3 How is the Holy Spirit working through your parish to draw people to Christ? What opportunities have we missed?

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# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 4

### Forms - Recording Forms

#### Synodal Conversations Recorder Notes

#### Small Group Sharing

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

4

How have your experiences with Catholics different from you in opinion, spirituality, or lifestyle aided you in your faith? How have they challenged you in your faith?

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# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 4

### Forms - Recording Forms

#### Synodal Conversations Recorder Notes

#### Small Group Sharing

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

5

How is the Holy Spirit drawing us all closer together in communion, participation, and mission? Where is the Holy Spirit leading the Church?

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# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 4

### Forms - Recording Forms

#### Synodal Conversations Recorder Notes Large Assembly Question

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1 What consensus or common thread emerged in regards to what we are doing well?

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# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 4

### Forms - Recording Forms

#### Synodal Conversations Recorder Notes Large Assembly Question

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2 What consensus or common thread emerged in regards to what the Holy Spirit is leading the Church to do better?

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# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 4

### Forms - Consent Form



ROMAN CATHOLIC  
DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

#### CONSENT FOR MEDIA PUBLICATION

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give my consent to utilize any photographs or images of myself, as well as the sound of my voice from any audio or video, to be used by the Diocese of St. Petersburg, or any parishes, schools or entities within the Diocese of St. Petersburg. Such use is given liberally, for any form of media publication, including any form of social media. I waive any rights I might have to inspect and approve the finished product or its use, and further waive any claim for any compensation associated with said use.

I acknowledge that I am of legal age and have the full capacity to execute this consent; or, if a minor, I am signing as the legal guardian on behalf of the above individual.

Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian Signature (for minor(s) only): \_\_\_\_\_

\* List all Children who may be covered by this agreement (Print first and last names):

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____





# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 5

### *Ground Rules for Synodal Consultation*

1. We are here to listen to each other, not to persuade each other.
2. We will be open to hearing about each other's emotions, especially as they are linked to our experiences. Attending to emotions is essential to the process of discernment.
3. We will speak for ourselves, using "I" statements, connecting what we know and believe to our own experiences.
4. We will avoid making generalizations or grand pronouncements.
5. We won't try to represent a whole group, and we will not ask others to represent, defend, or explain an entire group.
6. We will show respect and Christian charity to all. We will refrain from characterizing others' thoughts and feelings in a critical spirit. No one wants to be portrayed as stupid, blind, self-serving, bigoted, etc.
7. We will be mindful that each person is sacred, a dwelling of the Holy Spirit, and that our purpose is to discern the voice of the Spirit speaking in, with and through each other.
8. We will listen with resilience, "staying with it" even when something is hard to hear.
9. We will share speaking time and refrain from interrupting others, keeping to established time limits.
10. We will "pass" or "pass for now" if not ready to share—no explanation required.
11. We will keep what we hear in our small group confidential. Though a recorder will note ideas and concerns heard, we will not attribute statements to particular individuals by name or other identifying information.
12. We will know that it's possible to leave this meeting with seeds planted that can keep growing in the days ahead.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 6

### *Resources and Helpful Links*

[Diocese of St. Petersburg Website on the Synod](#)

[Synod Prayer Resources](#)

[Synod Communication Resources](#)

[Synod Information Resources](#)

[Diocese of St. Petersburg Parish Toolkit & Synod Session Resources](#)

### *Acknowledgements*

Thank you to the members of the Diocese of St. Petersburg Synod Planning Team

Diocesan Synod Contact and Diocesan Synod Team Chair: Dr. Lois Locey

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Leadership Roundtable and various dioceses throughout the worldwide Church assisted with the development of this toolkit.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 7

### Catechetical Document | PART I: SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

- I. Introduction
  - a. The upcoming Synod, *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*, is the fruit of the Spirit and the discernment of our Holy Father reading the signs of the times.
  - b. As Catholics, we are called to take up this mission in our own local Church, in or parishes, our communities, and in our families.
- II. The History of Synods
  - a. The Greek word is composed of two different prepositions (συν: with and ὁδός: path), which indicates a path or a trail along which a group of people journey together.
  - b. The idea of a journey in the spiritual life has come to signify conversion and dedication to living a life with Christ on the way toward eternal salvation.
- III. The Church and Synodality
  - a. “[T]he common dignity and mission of all the baptized, in exercising the variety and ordered richness of their charisms, their vocations and their ministries...In this ecclesiological context, synodality is the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church, the People of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelizing mission.”<sup>1</sup>
- IV. Scriptural Background
  - a. **One of the earliest expressions used to refer to the followers of Jesus was as those “belonging to the Way” (Acts 9:2, 18:25-26, 19:9, 19:23, 24:14, 24:22).**
  - b. The Christian community in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians calls the members of the community to greater awareness of their common life together without distinction (1 Cor 11:17 -34).
  - c. The Synoptic Gospels account of Jesus’ ministry while traveling constructs a narrative of Jesus who while journeying from city to city gathers his community to himself.
- V. The Council of Jerusalem
  - a. The Council of Jerusalem allows an insight into the synodality of the early Church as a way that she encountered, listened, and discerned the movement of the Spirit.

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 7

### Catechetical Document | PART II: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

- I. Early Development
  - a. The foundations of synods and synodality lie at the origin of Christianity, appearing in the Gospel and Acts.
  - b. Synods were convened to address crises or for regular administration.
  - c. The practice of synods and synodality form alongside the original structures of the Church such as distinctions between clergy & laity, dioceses & provinces.
- II. Early Ecumenical Councils
  - a. In the 4th century began ecumenical councils, which are of great importance to the Church, yet they belong to broader processes of reception.
  - b. Sometimes the significance of a synod comes to light – and the synod itself receives the rank of an ecumenical council – only long after the fact.
  - c. Synods and synodality have always been messy—including bitterness, violence, & other shortcomings—yet synods extend and serve the style of synodality natural to the Church.
- III. Later Ecumenical Councils
  - a. By the end of the first millennium, we find synods and synodality at every level of the Church: diocesan, provincial, national, continental, & universal.
  - b. The count of ecumenical councils remains a challenge for ecumenism in the present day: In the 11th century, Catholics added to the list of the first seven ecumenical councils the Fourth Council of Constantinople (869-870), and in the 16th century, Catholics added to this list the continental synods of the medieval and early modern periods, bringing the then total number of ecumenical councils to 19.
  - c. Vatican II did not address synodality explicitly, but it did address ecclesiology and the synodal tradition.
  - d. Therefore, Vatican II opened the way toward the present synodal process in which we reflect on our practice of synodality as a style of mutual listening, dialogue, and collective discernment that characterizes the life of the Church.

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 7

### Catechetical Document | PART III: CURRENT CONTEXT

- I. A Different Church
  - a. “Father Congar, of blessed memory, once said: ‘There is no need to create *another Church*, but to create a *different Church*’ (*True and False Reform in the Church*). That is the challenge. For a ‘different Church,’ a Church open to the newness that God wants to suggest, let us with greater fervor and frequency invoke the Holy Spirit and humbly listen to him, journeying together as he, the source of communion and mission, desires: with docility and courage.”<sup>2</sup>
  - b. While the Faith is unchanging, the Church expresses itself in different ways according to the needs of the people of every time.
  - c. “[T]he Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics.”<sup>3</sup>
- II. A Change of Epoch
  - a. “One could say that today we are not living in an epoch of change so much as an epochal change. The situations that we are living in today, therefore, pose new challenges which, at times, are also difficult for us to understand. Our time requires us to live problems as challenges and not as obstacles: the Lord is active and at work in our world.”<sup>4</sup>
  - b. For the Church to communicate the Faith amid this “change of epoch,” there must be an emphasis of discerning how the Lord is “active and at work in the world.”
- III. Challenges of Our Times
  - a. Our time has been characterized by a decisive rejection of authority, both in the world and in the Church.
  - b. Many find themselves on the margins of society and feel as if they do not have a voice.
  - c. There is a growing political, cultural, and social divide which challenges human solidarity and turns our neighbors into enemies.
- IV. Opportunities for the Church
  - a. Each of these challenges provide the Church with opportunities to grow in communion, participation, and mission.
  - b. As we embark on this process of growing in synodality, we pray for the gift of discernment, that in journeying together we may always follow the Lord’s will in our lives, in our parishes and communities, and in our Church.
  - c. In this way we can better fulfill the call of Christ: “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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20).

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, Address of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Opening of the Synod, 9 October 2021.

<sup>3</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, Meeting with the Participants in the Fifth Convention of the Italian Church, 10 November 2015.

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 7

### Catechetical Document | PART IV: Discernment

Communal discernment in its best and purest form is the articulation of a contemplative insight into the working of God's grace in a faith community. Community discernment is often an ongoing process. It takes time and patience. Discernment is not a quick answer (like a vote or a command decision). The actual time it takes to discern may require days, weeks, months or even years of prayer, study and listening. To be a discerning community, then, is to be a community of prayer.

Using the Ignatian Spirituality of the Discernment of Spirits, when a faith community contemplates important issues and seek solutions, those undergoing the discernment process will experience a process of spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation which will help the community to discern what the Holy Spirit is leading them to do.

**Spiritual consolation** is an experience of being so on fire with God's love that we feel impelled to praise, love, and serve God and help others as best as we can. Spiritual consolation encourages and facilitates a deep sense of gratitude for God's faithfulness, mercy, and companionship in our life. In consolation, we feel more alive and connected to others. When we experience spiritual consolation in a solution to an issue, we recognize God's lead.

**Spiritual desolation**, in contrast, is an experience of the soul in heavy darkness or turmoil. We are assaulted by all sorts of doubts, bombarded by temptations, and mired in self-preoccupations. We are excessively restless and anxious and feel cut off from others. Such feelings, in Ignatius's words, "move one toward lack of faith and leave one without hope and without love."

The key question in interpreting consolation and desolation is: *where is the movement coming from and where is it leading me?* Spiritual consolation does not always mean happiness. Spiritual desolation does not always mean sadness. Sometimes an experience of sadness is a moment of conversion and intimacy with God. Times of human suffering can be moments of great grace. Similarly, peace or happiness can be illusory if these feelings are helping us avoid changes we need to make. It is through the gift of time, prayer, study and listening that a faith community can discern the spirit.

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 8

### Questions for Distribution to Reflect and Pray in Preparation for Part Two - Prayer & Discernment Small Group Sharing

1. Who is journeying with you in your spiritual life. Who doesn't have this accompaniment? Who appears to you to be alone on the journey?
2. Do you feel heard or listened to in the Church? What enables or hinders you in speaking up?
3. How is the Holy Spirit working through your parish to draw people to Christ? What opportunities have we missed?
4. How have your experiences with Catholics different from you in opinion, spirituality, or lifestyle aided you in your faith? How have they challenged you in your faith?
5. How is the Holy Spirit drawing us all closer together in communion, participation, and mission? Where is the Holy Spirit leading the Church?

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 9

### Hospitality Tips

Gracious hospitality sends a message that everyone is welcome and everyone's presence is a gift to the community. Parishes are called to be welcoming places where the love of God is made known in a hurting world. Also, a priority of Courageously Living the Gospel is to invite all to encounter the love and mercy of Jesus Christ and to welcome and accompany one another.

Here are some hospitality tips for Synod Sessions:

- Provide signage in the parking lot that guides people to find the meeting location.
- Provide signage in the meeting room that guides people to find refreshments, restrooms, registration, etc.
- Provide greeters to welcome guests, distribute handouts and acclimate them to the space and the agenda.
- Provide refreshments and snacks out of concern for your guests.
- Provide materials in other languages if there is a need and provide sign language interpretation if needed.
- With their permission, collect email addresses for participants so you can continue to keep them informed of the Synod process.
- If you will be photographing sessions, inform the participants and request that parents of minors sign image consent forms or display image consent signage.
- Anticipate people with special needs and assist them as needed.
- Provide babysitting if possible.

#### **Image Consent Text for Signage:**

By entering these premises and attending this event you understand that your likeness and/or voice may be photographed, recorded, filmed or videotaped. Upon entry you consent to the unqualified right to use such pictures and/or recordings and grant to the Diocese of St. Petersburg the perpetual right to use your likeness, image, photograph without compensation for broadcast or exhibition in any medium and to put the finished pictures/recordings to any legitimate use without any limitation and releases the Diocese from any such use and waives any claims that may arise as a result of such use.





# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 10

### Promotional Tips

To encourage participation in the Synod Session, it is helpful to have a communication plan that outlines how, what, when and where you will communicate and to whom. On this page and the following pages, you will find tips and sample promotional materials.

Determine how you can reach your parish community with a message of invitation to participate in Journeying Together. What communication tools, events, opportunities and individuals can help you send this message? For example:

- Pulpit Announcement
- Bulletin Announcement
- Flyers | Postcards
- Email | E-Marketing
- Video Message
- Web Announcements
- Social Media Announcements
- Banner | Poster | Signage
- Personal or Phone Invitation
- Screen/Digital Announcement
- App Notification

To help localize this campaign at your parish, we suggest organizing a group photo that shows people from various walks of life, such as clergy, religious and laity, and people from various ages and ethnic backgrounds to show how we are coming together as one Church to listen to each other in a spirit of unity and joy. Please send email your photos to [journey@dosp.org](mailto:journey@dosp.org) for possible inclusion in Diocesan or Vatican publications. If you post photos to social media, please use the hashtag, #DOSPListening.

We have created templates and resources for you that can be found [here](#).



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 10

### Talking Points | Key Messages

Pope Francis is inviting all of us to reflect on our faith in God and how the Church is supporting us on our faith journey. This will help all of us to move forward.

In a world hurting by a pandemic, extreme weather conditions, massive migration, poverty, violence and moral relativism, the Church is asking us to take a step in faith and pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Pope Francis is reading the signs of the times and is seeking to incorporate “synodality” as a tool for the bishops in their role of governing the Church.

Journeying Together is a listening and sharing opportunity for the Diocese of St. Petersburg that seeks to discern how the Holy Spirit is leading the Church to move forward. This initiative is part of a global consultation process known as the “Synod on Synodality”, led by Pope Francis.

Journeying Together is our diocesan process through prayer and reflection, rooted in the encounter with Jesus in the Sacred Scriptures and the liturgical life of the Church, and inspired by an openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to hear the Spirit speaking to us.

A Church that journeys together describes the entire history of the Catholic Church. Jesus Christ walked with his apostles and disciples from town to town. The early Christian community gathered together for prayer, worship and consultation. In this diocese we already have the experience of journeying together through listening, as we did with Bishop Parkes’ Listening Sessions in 2017 and 2018.

“The Holy Spirit needs us. Listen to him by listening to each other. Don’t leave anyone out or behind.” – Pope Francis



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 10

### Sample Bulletin/Pulpit Announcements

#### **An Evening of Prayer and Learning- An Advent Journey of Hope**

At this time in our Church's history, our Holy Father is asking people to come together to discern our Church's future. Our parish is participating with an Evening of Prayer and Learning. All are invited to gather together on Tuesday, December 14th at 7:00 p.m. in order to deepen our communion and grow as Disciples of Jesus Christ. Make this event part of your Advent journey. We will focus on Scripture reflection, contemplation, discernment and growing in our understanding of the Catholic Church's mission and structure. Similar gatherings will be held throughout the Diocese of St. Petersburg. Please RSVP by December 5th.

#### **A Evening of Prayer and Discernment - Be A Part of History in the Making**

At this time in our Church's history, our Holy Father is asking people to come together to discern our Church's future. Our parish is participating with an Evening of Prayer and Discernment. All are invited to gather together on Tuesday, January 11th at 7:00 p.m. for learning, praying, listening and sharing. We will focus on key questions that can inspire and empower us to be active participants in the Church's mission. We welcome each person as we join together to consider how the Holy Spirit is leading the Church in the third millennium. Join us! Your voice is needed! Please RSVP by January 8th.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix 10

### Sample Postcard



You Are Invited to

**An Evening of Prayer and Learning**  
**Tuesday, December 14, 2021, 7:00 p.m.**  
**St. Anywhere Catholic Church**  
**123 Anytown Street**

Journeying Together is a historic opportunity for our parish to discern how the Holy Spirit is leading our Church. Make this event part of your Advent journey. We will focus on Scripture reflection, contemplation, discernment and growing in our understanding of the Catholic Church's mission and structure.  
RSVP by December 5, 2021 to [RSVP@RSVP.org](mailto:RSVP@RSVP.org)



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix I / Glossary of Terms

This glossary was created by the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops and is accessible at <https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/document/common/resources/Glossary.pdf>

**Authority - Baptism and Confirmation – Charisms – Church – Communion - Consensus – Consultation - Diocesan Pre-Synodal Meeting - Diocesan Synodal Team – Discernment – Ecclesial – Episcopal - Instrumentum Laboris - Local Church – Listening – Mission – Parrhesia – Participation - People of God – Power - Sensus fidei - Signs of the times – Synod - Synodal Process – Synodality - Vocation of All the People of God – Vademecum - Vatican II**

### Authority

The New Testament uses a specific term to express the power Jesus received from the Father to grant salvation, which He exercises over all creatures in the power (δύναμις) of the Holy Spirit: ἐξουσία (authority). It consists in imparting the grace that makes us “children of God” (cf. John 1,12). The Apostles receive this ἐξουσία from the risen Lord, who sends them to teach the nations by baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and by teaching them to observe all He has commanded (cf. Matthew 28,19-20). By virtue of baptism, every member of the People of God is given a share in this authority, having received the “anointing of the Holy Spirit” (cf. 1 John 2,20,27), having been taught by God (cf. John 6,45) and having been guided “to the complete truth” (cf. John 16,13). (ITC, Syn., no. 17)

There is to be no distance or separation between the community and its Pastors - who are called to act in the name of the only Pastor - but a distinction between tasks in the reciprocity of communion. A synod, an assembly, a council cannot take decisions without its legitimate Pastors. The synodal process must take place at the heart of a hierarchically structured community. In a diocese, for example, it is necessary to distinguish between the process of decision-making through a joint exercise of discernment, consultation and cooperation, and decision-taking, which is within the competence of the Bishop, the guarantor of apostolicity and Catholicity. Working things out is a synodal task; decision is a ministerial responsibility. A correct exercise of synodality must contribute to a better articulation of the ministry of the personal and collegial exercise of apostolic authority with the synodal exercise of discernment on the part of the community. (ITC, Syn., no. 69)

### Baptism and Confirmation

Baptism is the sacrament by which we enter into the People of God, freed from original sin and adopted as sons and daughters of God in Christ. Baptism is the fundamental identity of all the faithful, including priests, religious, and lay people. Pope Francis describes the mission of every baptized person as that of being a missionary disciple in the midst of the People of God, to bring the light of the Gospel to every corner of the world.

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries”, but rather that we are always “missionary disciples”. If we are not convinced, let us look at those first disciples, who, immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully: “We have found the Messiah!” (Jn 1:41). The Samaritan woman became a missionary immediately after speaking with Jesus and many Samaritans come to believe in him “because of the woman’s testimony” (Jn 4:39). So too, Saint Paul, after his encounter with Jesus Christ, “immediately proclaimed Jesus” (Acts 9:20; cf. 22:6-21). So what are we waiting for? (Evangelii Gaudium, no. 120)



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix I | Glossary of Terms

### Baptism and Confirmation (continued)

Confirmation is the sacrament by which the faithful receive the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In Confirmation, we become fully equipped for the mission entrusted to us at our baptism. The Spirit poured out upon us enables us to live ever more deeply our primordial vocation as sons and daughters of God who cry out “Abba, Father!” (Romans 8:15) We are not only called to live out our call as sons and daughters of God, but also to invite others into this filial relationship with the Father in Christ, of which the Holy Spirit makes us partakers.

### Charisms

The Lord’s ἐξουσία (authority) is expressed in the Church through the variety of spiritual gifts (τα πνευματικά) or charisms (τα χαρίσματα) the Spirit shares out among the People of God for the upbuilding of the one Body of Christ. In exercising them we need to respect an objective τάξις, so that they can develop in harmony and bear the fruit they are meant to bear for the good of all (cf. 1 Corinthians 12,28-30; Ephesians 4,11-13). The Apostles have the first place among them - with a special and pre-eminent role being attributed by Jesus to Simon Peter (cf. Matthew 16,18f., John 21,15ff.): they, in fact, are entrusted with the ministry of guiding the Church in fidelity to the depositum fidei (1 Timothy 6,20; 2 Timothy 1,12.14). But the term χάρισμα also evokes the gratuitous and varying character of the free initiative of the Spirit, who grants each one his or her own gift with a view to the general good (cf. 1 Corinthians 12,4-11; 29-30; Ephesians 4,7), always in terms of mutual submission and service (cf. 1 Corinthians 12,25): since the highest gift, the one that regulates them all, is love (cf. 1 Corinthians 12,31). (ITC, Syn., no. 18)

### Church

Taking up the ecclesiological perspective of Vatican II, Pope Francis sketches the image of a synodal Church as “an inverted pyramid” which comprises the People of God and the College of Bishops, one of whose members, the Successor of Peter, has a specific ministry of unity. Here the summit is below the base.

“Synodality, as a constitutive element of the Church, offers us the most appropriate interpretative framework for understanding the hierarchical ministry itself.... Jesus founded the Church by setting at her head the College of Apostles, in which the Apostle Peter is the ‘rock’ (cf. Matthew 16,18), the one who must “confirm” his brethren in the faith (cf. Luke 22,32). But in this Church, as in an inverted pyramid, the top is located below the base. Consequently, those who exercise authority are called ‘ministers’, because, in the original meaning of the word, they are the least of all”[68]. (ITC, Syn., no. 57)

### Consensus

Consensus in the context of the Synodal Process does not mean uniformity or a democratic majority. This would ignore the fact that the Holy Spirit can speak through the words of one single member of the People of God or a small group. Rather, consensus in synodal key refers to the process of listening to one another in order to discern the common path that God is calling us to in a spirit of communion, guided by the Holy Spirit.

### Consultation

In previous Synods, consultation was sought by means of questionnaires that were circulated among the faithful prior to a gathering of the Synod of Bishops in Rome on a particular topic. This current Synod seeks to broaden the experience of “consultation” in order to move towards a more synodal Church that more fully listens to and engages the entire People of God. In this way, “consultation” is now taking the form of a wider “participation.” The Synod of Bishops in Rome is no longer the sum total of the experience of Synodality in the Church, but rather the culmination of a long process by which the voice of the Spirit resounds throughout the whole Church, at the diocesan, national, continental, and universal levels.



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix I | Glossary of Terms

### Communion

Synodality is a living expression of the Catholicity of the Church as communion. In the Church, Christ is present as the Head united to His Body (Ephesians 1,22-23) in such a way that she receives from Him the fullness of the means of salvation. The Church is Catholic also because she is sent to all, in order to gather the entire human family in the richness of the plurality of cultural forms, under the Lordship of Christ and in the unity of His Spirit. The synodal path expresses and promotes her Catholicity in two ways: it shows the dynamic way in which the fullness of faith is shared by all members of the People of God and it assists in handing it on to all people and all peoples. (ITC, Syn., no. 58)

### Diocesan Pre-Synodal Meeting

Each local Church culminates the diocesan phase with a Diocesan Pre-Synodal Meeting. This gathering provides the opportunity for diverse members of the diocese to come together for a liturgical celebration, to pray together, to reflect on their experience of the Synodal Process in the diocese, to listen the feedback that has been raised, to dialogue about the current reality of the local Church and the signs of the times, and to discern the Spirit's call for the diocese in relation to its growth in synodal conversion. While much of the consultation process during the Diocesan Phase might have occurred within specific communities of the local Church, such as parishes, ministries, youth and other groups, the objective of the Diocesan Pre-Synodal Meeting is to bring together a representative cross-section of the whole diocese, including minority groups and those on the peripheries, and enable participants to listen, reflect, and discern together. Thereafter the outcome of the meeting should be part of the diocesan synthesis, as described in Part 4 of the Vademecum.

### Diocesan Synodal Team

The role of the Synodal team is to implement, coordinate, and oversee the diocesan phase of the Synodal Process under the leadership of the local Bishop, collaborating with the Diocesan Contact Person(s). The synodal team must plan the listening sessions to be carried out on the local level to ensure the widest participation possible including those on the margins. Special efforts must be made to engage those who are seldom listened to in the Church. The Synodal team organizes any gatherings, events, and meetings that coincide with the Synodal Process. The goal is to create an authentic experience of synodality at the local level. Upon the completion of the listening sessions, the Synodal team is responsible for elaborating the diocesan synthesis on the basis of the experiences and feedback received from all those who participated.

### Discernment

The Synodal Process entails a discernment process oriented towards consensus. We listen to each other in order to discern what God is saying to all of us. This kind of discernment is not only a onetime event, but ultimately a way of life, grounded in Christ, following the lead of the Holy Spirit, living for the greater glory of God. Communal discernment helps to build flourishing and resilient communities for the mission of the Church today. Discernment is a grace from God, but it requires our human involvement in simple ways: praying, reflection, paying attention to one's inner disposition, listening and talking to one another in an authentic, meaningful, and welcoming way. Discernment in this spiritual key plants seeds that can bear the fruits of fraternity, healing, communion, mission, and more. God comes to lead and inspire us as we seek to discern His will.

### Ecclesial

Synodality is the path of journeying together that corresponds to the deep nature of the Church. In this sense, any Synodal Process is deeply ecclesial since it is rooted in the nature of the Church and necessarily involves the common journey of the People of God. Walking together in a synodal way calls us to deeper communion with one another, moving towards an ever fuller participation in the mission we share. For this journey together, a vital principle is "sentire cum Ecclesia: to feel, sense and perceive in harmony with the Church. This is required not just of theologians, but of all the faithful; it unites all the members of the People of God as they make their pilgrim journey. It is the key to their 'walking together.'" (ITC, Syn., no. 56) We do not walk the synodal path alone, as isolated individuals, parishes, or dioceses. Rather, synodality is the journey of the entire Church all together, which is experienced and lived out across the whole of God's people.

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix I | Glossary of Terms

### Episcopal

The Greek term *episkopos* is used in the New Testament to refer to one who has “oversight” of the flock of God. The leaders in the early Christian communities were the successors of the apostles, and this apostolic succession continues to this day in the bishops who are appointed in the Catholic Church. “Bishops exercise their specific apostolic authority in teaching, sanctifying and governing the particular Church entrusted to their pastoral care at the service of the mission of the People of God.” (ITC, Syn., no. 56) “Episcopal” thus refers to the mission of the bishop, who guides the flock of Christ entrusted to his care amid the communion of the entire Church. The bishop is not meant to be the summit of a pyramid, but rather the servant of the faithful entrusted to his care. Episcopal conferences are the collegial body of bishops at a national or international level to promote fraternity among bishops and unity across local Churches.

### *Instrumentum Laboris*

The *Instrumentum Laboris* is the “Working Document” that is used as the basis for the discussions, interventions, and exchanges that take at the Synod of Bishops. It is a document published by the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. Unlike previous Synods, the current Synodal process will involve two versions of the *Instrumentum Laboris*. One version will be published after the listening phase at the diocesan level has been synthesized at the national level. This first draft will then serve as the “Working Document” for the meetings that will take place at the continental level. Based on the work of the continental phase, a second draft of the *Instrumentum Laboris* will then be published, which will serve as the basis for the meeting of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023.

### Local Church

In the context of the Synodal Process, “local Church” refers to each diocese, eparchy, ordinariate, and equivalent ecclesial body. The local Church is the first level on which synodality is exercised, encompassing parishes, ministries, movements, and other communities. Here “the pre-eminent manifestation of the Church consists in the full active participation of all God’s holy People in these liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in a single prayer, at one altar, at which the Bishop presides, surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers”[90]. (ICT, Syn., no. 77) The historical, linguistic and cultural links that mold interpersonal communication in the local Church and describe its particular features facilitate the adoption of a synodal style in its daily life and are the basis for effective missionary conversion. In the local Church Christian witness is embodied in specific human and social situations, which allows for an incisive initiation of synodal structures which serve mission. As Pope Francis has emphasized, “only to the extent that these organizations keep connected to the ‘base’ and start from people and their daily problems, can a synodal Church begin to take shape”[91]. (ITC, Syn., no. 77)

### Listening

Pope Francis has affirmed that: “A synodal Church is a Church which listens. [...] The faithful People, the College of Bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other; and all listening to the Holy Spirit.” The International Theological Commission explained this central role of listening as follows (ICT, Syn., no. 111): Synodal dialogue depends on courage both in speaking and in listening. It is not about engaging in a debate where one speaker tries to get the better of the others or counters their positions with brusque arguments, but about expressing whatever seems to have been suggested by the Holy Spirit as useful for communal discernment, at the same time being open to accepting whatever has been suggested by the same Spirit in other people’s positions, “for the general good” (1 Corinthians 12,7).

### Mission

The dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* sets out a vision of the nature and mission of the Church as communion, with the theological presuppositions of a suitable re-launch of synodality: the mystical and sacramental conception of the Church; her nature as People of God on pilgrimage through history towards the heavenly homeland, in which all her members are by virtue of baptism honored with the same dignity as children of God and appointed to the same mission; the doctrine of sacramentality of the episcopate and collegiality in hierarchical communion with the Bishop of Rome. (ITC, Syn., no. 40)



# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix I | Glossary of Terms

### **Parrhesia**

*Parrhesia* refers to the boldness that the coming of the Holy Spirit brought about in the hearts of the apostles at Pentecost. It is the inner courage that sent them out to proclaim the Good News that Jesus is Lord without fear in the days of the Early Church. The Spirit offers us this same boldness to carry out the mission of the Church today. *Parrhesia* is required in the Synodal Process so that we can speak boldly and listen humbly, inspired by the Holy Spirit as we journey forward towards this “new phase of evangelization” to which God calls us (cf. ITC, Syn., no. 121)

The *parrhesía* of the Spirit required the People of God on its synodal journey is the trust, frankness and courage to “enter into the expanse of God’s horizon” in order to “ensure that a sacrament of unity exists in the world and that man is therefore not destined for dispersion and confusion”[169]. The lived and enduring experience of synodality is, for the People of God, a source of the joy promised by Jesus, a catalyst of new life, the springboard for a new phase of missionary commitment. (ITC, Syn., no. 121)

### **Participation**

A synodal Church is a Church of participation and co-responsibility. In exercising synodality she is called to give expression to the participation of all, according to each one’s calling, with the authority conferred by Christ on the College of Bishops headed by the Pope. Participation is based on the fact that all the faithful are qualified and called to serve each other through the gifts they have all received from the Holy Spirit. The authority of Pastors is a specific gift of the Spirit of Christ the Head for the building up of the entire Body, not a delegated and representative function of the people. (ITC, Syn., no. 67)

The distinction between deliberative and consultative votes must not allow us to underrate the opinions expressed and votes made in various synodal assemblies and councils. The expression *votum tantum consultivum*, which indicates the weight of evaluations and proposals in such august assemblies, is inadequate if it is understood according to the mens of civil law in its various expressions [81].

The consultation that takes place in synodal assemblies is actually different, because the members of the People of God who take part in them are responding to the summons of the Lord, listening as a community to what the Spirit is saying to the Church through the Word of God which resonates in their situation, and interpreting the signs of the times with the eyes of faith. In the synodal Church the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on taking pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God’s will. So, in coming to formulate their own decisions, Pastors must listen carefully to the views and experiences of the faithful. Canon law stipulates that, in certain cases, they must act only after having sought and obtained the various opinions according to juridically established procedures [82]. (ICT, Syn., no. 68) At the same time, the path of synodality requires much wider participation than only that which is required by the law.

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix I / Glossary of Terms

### People of God

The Second Vatican Council focused on the Church as the “People of God.” This makes clear that the Church is not only a hierarchical structure, but a people on pilgrimage together, guided by God on its journey. God brings us into unity with one another as He draws us into union with Himself: “God does not make men and women holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness.” (Lumen Gentium, 9) This people was first made manifest in Israel, whom God chose as His own and with whom he established his first covenant. In Jesus Christ, entry into the People of God has been extended to every people and nation: “Go therefore, make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). God invites all peoples to be part of the people that is particularly his own: “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9-10) The mission of the Church is to gather the People of God throughout its journey through history in view of the Kingdom of God. In this sense, the Church is the sign and instrument of “intimate union with God and the unity of the entire human race” (Lumen Gentium, 1). The Church is at the service of the mission of Christ, the Good Shepherd, who brings all of humanity together in himself: “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.” (John 10:16)

### Power

The New Testament uses a specific term to express the power Jesus received from the Father to grant salvation, which He exercises over all creatures in the power (δύναμις) of the Holy Spirit: ἐξουσία (authority). It consists in imparting the grace that makes us “children of God” (cf. John 1,12). The Apostles receive this ἐξουσία from the risen Lord, who sends them to teach the nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and by teaching them to observe all He has commanded (cf. Matthew 28,19-20). By virtue of baptism, every member of the People of God is given a share in this authority, having received the “anointing of the Holy Spirit” (cf. 1 John 2,20,27), having been taught by God (cf. John 6,45) and having been guided “to the complete truth” (cf. John 16,13). (ITC, Syn., no. 17)

In terms of revitalizing synodal practice on the level of the universal Church, Blessed Paul VI instituted the Synod of Bishops. It is a “permanent Council of Bishops for the universal Church”, directly and immediately subject to the power of the Pope, “providing information and offering advice”, which “can also enjoy the power of making decisions when such power is conferred upon it by the Roman Pontiff”[41]. This institution aims to continue to extend to the People of God the benefits of communion lived during the Council. (ITC, Syn., no. 41)

### Sensus fidei

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is manifested in the *sensus fidei* of the faithful [65]. “In all the baptized, from first to last, the sanctifying power of the Spirit is at work, impelling us to evangelization. The People of God is holy thanks to this anointing, which makes it infallible in credendo. This means that it does not err in faith, even when it cannot find words to explain that faith. The Spirit guides it in truth and leads it to salvation. As part of His mysterious love for humanity, God furnishes the totality of the faithful with an instinct of faith – *sensus fidei* – which helps them to discern what is truly of God. The presence of the Spirit gives Christians a certain connaturality with divine realities, and a wisdom which enables them to grasp those realities intuitively”[66]. This connaturality shows itself in a “*sentire cum Ecclesia*: to feel, sense and perceive in harmony with the Church. This is required not just of theologians, but of all the faithful; it unites all the members of the People of God as they make their pilgrim journey. It is the key to their ‘walking together.’”[67] (ITC, Syn., no. 56)

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix I / Glossary of Terms

### Signs of the Times

The Second Vatican Council took a decisive step forward towards the importance of the Church reading the “signs of the times.” This means that the Church does not carry out her mission in a vacuum, detached from the realities of the world around her. Rather, the Church is sent out in the midst of the world, in order to unite men and women of every time and place to God and one another. The Church must therefore be attentive to the needs, realities, and concerns of the world in every era in order to carry out her mission in the service of humanity. The Church must thus read the signs of the times in the light of the faith, in order to discern how God is calling her to respond amid the circumstances and events of every period of time. Ultimately, reading the signs of the times is a means of realizing the profound solidarity between the Church and humanity: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.” (Gaudium et Spes, 1)

### Synod

The Synod is “the programme of those synodal events in which the Church is called together by the competent authority in accordance with the specific procedures laid down by ecclesiastical discipline, involving the whole People of God in various ways on local, regional and universal levels, presided over by the Bishops in collegial communion with the Bishop of Rome, to discern the way forward and other particular questions, and to take particular decisions and directions with the aim of fulfilling its evangelising mission.” (ITC, Syn., no. 70)

### Synodal Process

Synodality is not so much an event but an ongoing path and process. The Synodal Process that is currently being undertaken by the Church involves the entire People of God. It begins with a diocesan phase, which has been detailed in this Vademecum, followed by a national phase, continental phase, and finally a culminating phase of the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome.

### Synodality

Synodality, as defined by the International Theological Commission in 2018, is “the action of the Spirit in the communion of the Body of Christ and in the missionary journey of the People of God.” Pope Francis describes a synodal Church as a “listening Church knowing that listening is more than feeling. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. We must all listen to the Holy Spirit, the spirit of Truth to know what the Spirit is saying to the Church. [...] This is what the Lord expects from the Church of the third millennium.” (Address at the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015) Synodality creates the opportunity to listen to all and provide opportunities to listen to the Holy Spirit and the People of God in order to discern together and walk forward on a common path. Pope Francis understands this as walking together and accompanying each other on the spiritual journey to live out our call to mission in communion with one another.

# Parish Empowerment Toolkit



## Appendix I | Glossary of Terms

### Vocation of All the People of God

This vocation of all the People of God, the community of believers in Jesus Christ, is to bring about the Kingdom of God. All members of the Church, laity, religious, and clergy according to their proper charisms and roles collaborate in the responsibility for fulfilling its mission. Vatican Council II urged active involvement in the life of the church by emphasizing the principles of collaborative responsibility, consultation and lay participation. The laity have an active part to play in the life and activity of the Church, their activity is so necessary within church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is generally unable to achieve its full effectiveness. (Apostolicam Actuositatem, 10) Pastors also know that they themselves were not meant by Christ to shoulder alone the entire saving mission of the Church toward the world. On the contrary they understand that it is their noble duty so to shepherd the faithful and recognize their service and charismatic gifts that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking with one heart. (Lumen Gentium, 30)

### Vademecum

The Vademecum is a handbook to support the efforts of all of the People of God to contribute to the listening and discernment that is the foundation for the Synod on Synodality. It is a stimulus and a practical guide offering ideas for those appointed as a diocesan (or parish) contact person or team, mindful that each local Church has its own culture, traditions, recent history, and resources.

### Vatican II

Pope John XXIII convoked the twenty-first ecumenical council in the history of the Church, which gathered all the bishops of the world between 1962 and 1965 at the Vatican. In the opening address of the Council, John XXIII characterised its purpose in this way:

What is necessary today is that the whole of Christian doctrine, with no part of it lost, be received in our times by all with a new fervour, in serenity and peace, in that traditional and precise conceptuality and expression which is especially displayed in the acts of the Councils of Trent and Vatican I. [...] What is needed is that this certain and unchangeable doctrine, to which loyal submission is due, be investigated and presented in the way demanded by our times. For the deposit of faith, the truths contained in our venerable doctrine, are one thing; the fashion in which they are expressed, but with the same meaning and the same judgement, is another thing. This way of speaking will require a great deal of work and, it may be, much patience: types of presentation must be introduced which are more in accord with a teaching authority which is primarily pastoral in character. (Gaudet Mater Ecclesia, 11 October 1962)

Pope Paul VI brought the Council to its conclusion and implemented many of its reforms, including the use of the vernacular in the liturgy as well as promoting unity between Christians and within the entire human family. Some of the decisive turning points of the Second Vatican Council include: a new openness to dialogue and unity with non-Christians and Christians who are not Catholic (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, *Unitatis Redintegratio*); a new approach to the relationship between the Church and the world (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*); and a renewed understanding of the nature of the Church, particularly as the “People of God” (cf. *Lumen Gentium*). The Synod of Bishops was instituted in 1975 as a way of continuing the fraternal and collegial experience of the Second Vatican Council, to continue discerning the signs of the times in each successive era in a spirit of communion and mission.