

For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission.

- **Synod:** The purpose is not to produce more documents. It is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hope flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts and restore strength to our hands for our common mission. It is a journey of growing authentically towards the communion and mission that God calls the Church to live out in the third millennium.
- **Communion:** By His gracious will, God gathers us together as diverse people of one faith, through the covenant that he offers to his people. The communion we share finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity. It is Christ who reconciles us to the Father and unites us with each other in the Holy Spirit. Together, we are inspired by listening to the Words of God, through the living Tradition of the Church and grounded in the faith we share. We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God's call for his people.
- **Participation:** A call for the involvement of all who belong to the People of God, laity, consecrated and ordained, to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another. This listening creates space for us to hear the Holy Spirit together, and guides our aspirations for the Church of the Third Millennium.
- **Mission:** The Church exists to evangelize. We can never be centered on ourselves. Our mission is to witness the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. The Synodal Process has a deep missionary dimension to it. It is intended to enable the Church to better witness to the Gospel, especially with those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographically areas of the world. The Synod is a path by which the Church can more fruitfully fulfill her mission of evangelization in the world, as a leaven at the service of the coming of God's kingdom.

Questions

For a Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel journey together. How is this journey happening in your local church, allowing the Church to proclaim the Gospel? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?

- Recall our experiences: What experience of your local Church does this question call to mind?
- What joy did they bring? What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds did they reveal? What insights have they elicited?
- Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound?
- What is the Spirit asking of us?

1. Companions on the Journey

In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road. In our local Church, who are those who “walk together”? Who are those who seem further apart? How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

2. Listening

How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore? How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people? What facilitates or inhibits our listening? How well do we listen to those on the peripheries? How is the contribution of consecrated men and women integrated? What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own? What space is there for the voice of minorities, especially people who experience poverty, marginalization or social exclusion?

3. Speaking Out

What enables or hinders speaking up courageously, candidly and responsibly in our local Church and in society? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us? How does the relationship with the local media work? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community?

4. Celebration

How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community? How do they inspire the most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy? What space is given to participating in the ministries of lector and acolyte?

5. Sharing Responsibility for our Common Mission

How is every baptized person called to participate in the mission of the Church? What hinders the baptized from being active in mission? What area of mission are we neglecting? How does the community support its members who serve society in various ways? How does the Church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way? How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?

6. Dialogue in Church and Society

To what extent do diverse peoples in our community come together for dialogue? What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church? How do we promote collaboration with neighboring dioceses, religious communities in the area of lay associations and movements? How are divergences of vision or conflict and difficulties addressed? What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to? What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation? How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other

sectors of society, the spheres of politics, economics, culture, civil society, and the people who live in poverty?

7. Ecumenism

What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? What do we share and how do we journey together? What fruits have we drawn from walking together? What are the difficulties? How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

8. Authority and Participation

How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice? How are evaluations conducted and by whom? How are lay ministries and responsivity of lay people promoted? Have we had fruitful experiences of synodality on a local level? How do Synodal bodies function at the level of the local Church? How can we foster a more Synodal approach in our participation and leadership?

9. Discerning and Deciding

What methods and processes do we use in decision-making? How can they be improved? How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures? Do our decision-making methods help us listen to the whole People of God? What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice? What tolls and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability? How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?

10. Forming Ourselves in Synodality

How does our church community form people to be more capable of “walking together,” listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue? What formation is offered to foster discernment and exercise of authority in a Synodal way?