

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOUR TABLE

## Parish Listening Session



### STEP 1

#### **SELECT A TABLE NOTE TAKER**

There is no need to record all the details or quote everyone. Your volunteer note taker will record the key themes of the discussion, the sentiment, and try to capture the most important points. Remember to record both the majority and minority responses. Finally, the note taker will turn in your table's listening session response(s).

### STEP 2

#### **SELECT A TABLE LEADER**

A good table leader will help the group open the discussion, and if needed prompt the group to move forward with the discussion. If helpful, to invite others' responses to insure that everyone has the opportunity speak.

### STEP 3

#### **SELECT A TOPIC**

In the first round, the table should choose one of the pre-selected topics 1-10 that the Synod of Bishops is most interested in obtaining responses. The table can collectively decide which topic they want to discuss. You will find all the topics on the following pages. Go to step 4

In the second round, the table may choose topics 1-11 for their second listening session. The added eleventh is a topic of the table's own desire.

### STEP 4

#### **HOLD THE DISCUSSION**

First, fill out the "Table Information Sheet" on the other side of this page. Second, hold the discussion. When done, go back to step 3 for the second round.

### STEP 5

#### **TURN IN THE NOTES**

When done with all of your listening sessions, staple together your "Table Information Sheet" and your "Topic Notes" and turn it in.

# TABLE INFORMATION SHEET

Parish Name & City \_\_\_\_\_

Note Taker Name/Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / **2022**

Total Number of people at your table \_\_\_\_\_ (ideally 6-10 people)

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*Providing the following information is voluntary*

### How many of each at the table?

Male(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Female(s) \_\_\_\_\_

### How many participants in each age group?

\_\_\_\_\_ minor children ages 1–17

\_\_\_\_\_ 18–25

\_\_\_\_\_ 26–39

\_\_\_\_\_ 40–64

\_\_\_\_\_ 65–84

\_\_\_\_\_ 85+

### What is the state of life for the participants?

*(Check all that apply)*

Single       Widowed

Married       Divorced

Deacon       Priest

Vowed Religious (Br., Sr., Nun, Monk)

### What is the primary race and/or ethnicity of individuals at your table?

*(Check all that apply)*

Caucasian

African-American or Black

Asian

Hispanic or Latino

Middle Eastern or North African

Native American or Alaskan Native

Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Other \_\_\_\_\_

### How many participants are represented at your table in each of these religions?

\_\_\_\_\_ Catholic

\_\_\_\_\_ Orthodox

\_\_\_\_\_ Non-Catholic Christian

\_\_\_\_\_ Judaism

\_\_\_\_\_ Buddhism

\_\_\_\_\_ Hinduism

\_\_\_\_\_ Muslim

\_\_\_\_\_ Agnostic (unsure of God's existence)

\_\_\_\_\_ Atheist (deny the existence of God)

\_\_\_\_\_ None

Other \_\_\_\_\_

### Does anyone at your table participate in a Catholic affiliated group?

*(Check all that apply)*

Religious Education

Catholic School

Youth or Young Adult Group

Campus Ministry

Men's or Women's Group

Prayer group

Faith Sharing Group

Liturgical or Sacrament Ministry Group

Other \_\_\_\_\_

### How many at your table attend Catholic Mass according to these options?

\_\_\_\_\_ Daily      \_\_\_\_\_ Weekly      \_\_\_\_\_ Monthly

\_\_\_\_\_ Rarely      \_\_\_\_\_ Never

## TOPIC #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?**

Do we as a Church recognize that we are to be companions? What is the “journey” as those who are believers in God? What is it for those who might not believe, and how do we journey together?

Do we even recognize that society and the Catholic Church are on the same road? We might be together, or we might be at odds, but are we in it together? Where do we work for greater complementarity or unity? Is tolerance needed at times?

How does God call us to grow as companions? Are we willing to grow? Who do we lift up on our shoulders on the journey?

Companions: (1) a person or animal with whom one spends a lot of time or with whom one travels; (2) one of a pair of things intended to complement or match each other; (3) accompany.

Citation: Google’s English dictionary is provided by Oxford Languages





## TOPIC #2: LISTENING

Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice. 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 [fringes of society]? 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?

Do we see any prejudices or blind spots that keep us from an open mind and heart? Where do we feel heard, and not heard? Is everyone worth listening to, and worthy of respect? If we are in the majority, do we take time to listen to the minority, or do we dismiss them?

Listening: (1) give one's attention to a sound; (2) take notice of and act on what someone says; respond to advice or a request; (3) make an effort to hear something; be alert and ready to hear something.

Citation: Google's English dictionary is provided by Oxford Languages



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## TOPIC #3: SPEAKING OUT

**All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity. 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 (not only Catholic media)? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?**

When have you observed individuals speaking out responsibly or irresponsibly, and what can we draw from it in a positive manner? Do we look to only a religious leader, or community leader to speak out? Do we only speak out when it is after the fact, when things boil over, or are we proactive in speaking up?

Does gossip get confused with speaking out? At what level do we desire our leaders to speak out? At what level do we desire speaking out ourselves? When has not speaking out negatively or positively affected us?

Speak Out: (1) express one's feelings or opinions frankly and publicly. Citation: Google's English dictionary is provided by Oxford Languages







## TOPIC #4: CELEBRATION

**“Walking together” is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word [Scripture] and the celebration of the Eucharist. 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?**

Walking together in the above sense requires one to believe in the Eucharist, in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but what about those who do not? Does our communal listening inspire others to walk with us? As Catholics, what is worth celebrating? As non-Catholics, what is worth celebrating?

Are we connecting with one another as the Body of Christ, and to God in the celebration of the Eucharist (Mass)? Is our participation in the Eucharist inspiring, invigorating, or is it in need of anything?

Inspire: (1) fill (someone) with the urge or ability to do or feel something, especially to do something creative.

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## TOPIC #5: SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION

**Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate. Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptized person called to participate in the mission of the Church? What hinders the baptized from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting? How does the community support its members who serve society in various ways (social and political involvement, scientific research, education, promoting social justice, protecting human rights, caring for the environment, etc.)? 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?**

Are you involved in a common mission within the Church? Is there a mission the Church should undertake that you do not see in practice? What is your hope for a greater mission yet to be embraced?

Mission: (1) an important assignment carried out for political, religious, or commercial purposes, typically involving travel; (2) the vocation or calling of a religious organization, especially a Christian one, to go out into the world and spread its faith.

Citation: Google's English dictionary is provided by Oxford Languages





## TOPIC #6: DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

**Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding. 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, lay associations and movements, etc.?**

**How are divergences of vision, or conflicts 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 people who live in poverty?**

Dialogue: (1) conversation between two or more people as a feature of a book, play, or movie; (2) take part in a conversation or discussion to resolve a problem [or difference].

Citation: Google's English dictionary is provided by Oxford Languages







## TOPIC #7: ECUMENISM

The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey. 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?

Theological differences are evident between Christian denominations, some take us in opposing directions, others less so. Where do you see the greatest convergence of belief, and the greatest separation? Do we build upon areas of common belief, or do we drift toward a lowest common denominator?

What is your hope for greater unity, and what steps do you envision helping us journey there?

Ecumenism vs. Interfaith: Ecumenism promotes good relations and unity among Christian Churches, denominations. Interfaith dialogue promotes good relations between Christianity and other non-Christian religions.



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## TOPIC #8: AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

**A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church. 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 the responsibility 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 (Pastoral Councils in parishes and dioceses, Presbyteral [priests'] Council, etc.)? How can we foster a more synodal approach in our participation and leadership?**

“The Church teaches that it is divinely founded, and its essential structure – the faithful, led by the priests, governed by the bishops under the pope – is divinely ordered. Other structures, like parish councils, national bishops’ conferences, or the Synod of Bishops, are considered to be helpful, but are not considered to be a part of the Church’s divinely ordered hierarchical constitution.”<sup>i</sup>

What are the essential distinctions in the hierarchy of the Church and in the Church as the Body of Christ? Where do problems



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## TOPIC #8: AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

arise when governance is not exercised rightly? Where has governance been applied properly and brought greater hope, joy, mission driven activity, justice, and other positive outcomes?

Jesus gives his pastoral authority to Peter when he commands, “Feed my lambs, take care of my sheep, feed my sheep.” He is delegating his authority using imagery found throughout the Old Testament. In other instances, he delegates his authorities to Peter and the other Apostles. What are the strengths to Jesus’ intent and delegation of authority? What happens if authority is abdicated, meaning given over to another person or entity? What are the best uses of authority in how Jesus handed it on to be exercised in His name? Have we fallen short in some respects?

What is the hope for our efforts in being responsible with our authority and participation in the Church?

Synodality: “Synodality as a concept really just means collegiality. It is the way in which the different parts of the Church come together as the mystical Body of Christ”<sup>ii</sup>

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## TOPIC #9: DISCERNING AND DECIDING

**In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community. 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 to 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 tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability? How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?**

We consult our religious leaders in various matters, and our religious leaders consult us in this very Synod. What expertise do you offer the Synod of Bishops as they consult you? If it seems difficult to give or receive consultation, what steps could improve the opportunity? Where is hope found in consulting?

Consult: (1) seek information or advice (from someone with expertise in a particular area); (2) an act of consulting a professional; a consultation.

Citation: Google's English dictionary is provided by Oxford Languages





## TOPIC #10: FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

**Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning. 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 the exercise of authority in a synodal way?**

If we are to discern well, we must judge well all that is before us, as we learn from the past. If we were to give energy in our discernment to the past, present, and future – in what proportion do we expend this energy, time, and effort?

Do we take seriously the need to be formed to “walk together,” or do we think there is no need for it? Where do we find that we currently have solidarity with others? Is there a need for it? Jesus formed his disciples to take the good news to the poor, to every village, town, and countryside. Are we “walking together” with Christ? Do we need to do this more often?

Where are we walking together? In a religious sense? In a practical sense with those who are suffering? In an openness of generosity and spirit?



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## **TOPIC #10: FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY**

Receptivity: willingness to consider or accept new suggestions and ideas.

Discernment: (1) ability to judge well; (2) perception in the absence of judgment with a view to obtaining spiritual guidance and understanding.

Citation: Google's English dictionary is provided by Oxford Languages

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## TOPIC #11: YOUR TABLE'S CHOICE

TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

The Synod of Bishops recognizes that the people of God may want to address various topics that are not included in their pre-selected ten topics. Please state your table's topic as clearly and succinctly as possible above. Then, address the nuances and most important aspects of the topic in the notes to follow on the other side of this page.

If you could address the Pope and the Synod of Bishops, what would you want to ask them to consider or discuss?

You might state why the topic is important and relevant at this point in history, and where it is headed in the future. It can be especially helpful to address the hopes and dreams, the challenging realities, the faithfulness and inspiration regarding this topic.



