



# Synodal Conversations

## Participant's Handouts

The Synod is a participative and inclusive **process of listening and discerning** that offers everyone the opportunity to contribute to how the People of God can better 'journey together'.

Our 'Synodal' conversation depends on courage both in speaking and in listening. It is not about debate, but about discerning what the Spirit of God may be saying. We believe God is always present and active in the details of our lives and that he will reveal his plans and purposes to us if we make an effort to be attentive. It begins with **listening**.

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# Core Principle of the Synod & Ground Rules

## Core principle:

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**Our Synod journey takes place in the midst of where the Church ordinarily lives and works in the day to day lives of the faithful. The Synodal process invites each one of us - the People of God to recall that we journey together. Moreover, in that journey of faith we are called to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit.**

*Vatican Preparatory Document for the Synod # 27*

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## Participant Ground Rules

### Active listening

- We listen to what is being said, not focussing on what we will say afterwards
- We give full attention and presence to the person who is speaking.
- We allow ourselves to be influenced and learn from the other
- We welcome the speaker without judgment – each person is the expert on his or her own life. This requires humility, openness, patience.
- We are able to sit with silence
- We have an awareness that the Holy Spirit speaks to us through the other person.

### Speaking from the heart

- We sincerely express ourselves, our experience, our sentiments and thoughts.
- We offer a generous gift to the other, in return for being actively listened to.
- We speak about our own experience as we see it and as we live it, but do not impose our judgements on others.
- We take responsibility not only for what we say, but also for what we feel. We do not blame others for what we feel.

### Facilitator will invite:

The Invitation Method is a way to include all people in the conversation in a very respectful atmosphere.

- While each person is speaking, the others listen.
- No one may interrupt the speaker or jump in to speak until invited by the facilitator.

### Facilitator & Note Taker Roles

The role of listening session facilitators is to guide the conversations. Please listen to their instructions. They, or someone else, will also take some notes. The notes will be anonymous. The notes from all of the small groups at your community's listening sessions will be summarised into one feedback report. This listening session report will be sent to the Diocese where the Diocesan Synodal Pathway Group will create a summary of all listening sessions. This will help inform our Pre-Synod Diocesan Gathering in January. Following the gathering a report will be submitted to the Bishops' Conference in February 2022.

## Three Session Listening Conversation – Session 1

### Connecting

- Who are you and where are you from?
- How are you as we begin this conversation?

### Introduction & Prayer

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.

### The Call to Listen to God's Spirit

*The Holy Father is offering us the opportunity to participate in a time of listening and reflecting. He hopes this will help us to discern how God's presence comes into our lives and what the Spirit of God is prompting us to do anew, so that we might be more alive and creative in our response to the call of Jesus, our Way, Truth and Life.*  
*Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Pastoral Letter, 3 October 2021*

#### Quiet Reflection:

Pope Francis is asking all of us to gather together to consider how we journey together in the world today. At the heart of this is the invitation to listen to what God may be saying to us about our journeying. This means listening to the Spirit of God in Scripture, in the life of the Church and **also** in the hearts of each one of us. Because we believe that we are all temples of and gifted by the Holy Spirit.

- Are you ready to listen to other people gathered here today?
- Are you prepared to encounter the Spirit of God in others?
- What would stop you from being open to listening?
- How might your own agenda stop you from hearing the Spirit in others?

#### In small groups - share together:

- What is your experience of listening to God? Do you have an awareness of the Holy Spirit within you?
- To what extent are you open to listening deeply to others today? Are you open to being surprised by God today?

## Scripture The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52)

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus stood still and said, 'Call him here.' And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; get up, he is calling you.' So, throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'My teacher, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has made you well.' Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

### In small groups – Share together:

- What strikes you about the characters and how they respond to the situation?
- What do their attitude and actions evoke for you about your experience of the Church today?

## Reflecting on 'journeying together'

*"Now that there is greater normality in daily life, we have a unique opportunity to refresh and maybe reshape these patterns of life in the Church. In starting what can be described as a 'Church-wide listening process' Pope Francis is inviting us to listen again to each other, hearing experiences of faith with all its joys and disappointments, and to find new ways of strengthening each other."*

*Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Pastoral Letter 3 October 2021*

### Reflecting on the experience of the pandemic

- What has been your experience of 'journeying together' these last eighteen months – as parish/community?
  - What strengths did I find in my faith and faith community? How was I disappointed or sorrowful? In what ways did the grace of God most clearly touch and uplift me?
- How effectively has your Parish / community 'journeyed' with others, including those Catholics who no longer participate in your community, those who are not Catholic, and those experiencing poverty, hardship or exclusion?

*Each small group sharing should conclude by deciding the contribution you wish to share back to the large group.*

## Conclusion & Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus  
I give you my hands to do your work  
I give you my feet to go your way  
I give you my eyes to see as you do  
I give you my tongue to speak your words  
I give you my mind that you may think in me  
I give you my spirit that you may pray in me  
Above all, I give you my heart  
that you may love in me  
your Father and all mankind  
I give you my whole self that you may grow in me  
so that it is you Lord Jesus  
who live and work and pray in me. **Amen**  
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## Three Session Listening Conversation – Session 2

### Connecting

- How are you as we begin this conversation?
- What did you appreciate about the last session? How has the experience of listening to one another impacted you since then?

### Introduction & Prayer

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.

### The Call to Listen to God's Spirit (5 mins)

*We all know the adage 'It's good to talk'. We know how important communication is for every relationship. But talking must be matched by listening. Indeed, often the listening is more demanding, and really it should come first. So it is with this 'Synodal' invitation. The pathway is listening, the task is discerning together the important lessons and prompting of the Holy Spirit, and the outcome greater participation in the life and mission given to us by the Lord.*

*Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Pastoral Letter, 3 October 2021*

#### In small groups - share together:

- What gets in the way of your listening to others? What gets in the way of you listening to the Spirit of God within you?
- What excited you about taking time in this synodal process to listen to God speaking in you, and in others? What fears might you have?

### Scripture The Journey of the Synodal Community, Ephesians 4:1-16, 25-32.

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, 'When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.'

(When it says, 'He ascended', what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

## Reflecting on 'journeying together'

### Communion (20 mins)

***In small groups – share together.*** (Read all the questions first and then begin to share.)

- Thinking about the pandemic, and perhaps more broadly, how do you experience the Church community journeying together? When does this bring joy? When might it bring pain or sadness?
- What has the experience of 'journeying together' taught us about what it means to be Church? When we say 'our Church', who is part of it?

### Participation (20 mins)

***In small groups – share together.*** (Read all the questions first and then begin to share.)

- How does your particular Church community ensure you are part of the 'journey'? How does the community include you? How does it not?
- How does it include others? Who is missing on this journey? Whom do we need to listen to?
- How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued and the way to reach them? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice?

### Mission (20 mins)

***In small groups – share together.*** (Read all the questions first and then begin to share.)

- What would you wish to celebrate about how your parish/community lives its mission?
- How does your community decide priorities for mission?
- Where do you see people in your parish/community living out the Church's mission in their own lives and work? How does your parish/community support them?
- What areas of mission are we neglecting?
- In what ways is our partnership with people beyond the Church developing?

*Each small group sharing should conclude by deciding the contribution they wish to share back to the large group.*

## Conclusion & Prayer

Lord Jesus

I give you my hands to do your work

I give you my feet to go your way

I give you my eyes to see as you do

I give you my tongue to speak your words I

give you my mind that you may think in me

I give you my spirit that you may pray in me

Above all, I give you my heart

that you may love in me

your Father and all mankind

I give you my whole self that you may grow in

me so that it is you Lord Jesus

who live and work and pray in me.

**Amen**

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## Three Session Listening Conversation – Session 3

### Connecting

- How are you as we begin this conversation?
- What did you appreciate about the last session? How has the experience of listening to one another impacted you since then?

### Introduction & Prayer

**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;  
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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.**

### The Call to Listen to God's Spirit

- What are you learning through these synodal conversations about the experience of listening in the Church?

### Scripture The First Council (Acts 15:1-35)

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.'



The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles. After they finished speaking, James replied, 'My brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first looked favourably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written,

"After this I will return,  
and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen  
from its ruins I will rebuild it,  
and I will set it up, so that all other peoples may seek the Lord—  
even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called.  
Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things known from long ago."

Therefore, I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood. For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues.'

Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among their members and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers, with the following letter: 'The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds, we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.'

So they were sent off and went down to Antioch. When they gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. When its members read it, they rejoiced at the exhortation. Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. After they had been there for some time, they were sent off in peace by the believers to those who had sent them. But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, and there, with many others, they taught and proclaimed the word of the Lord.

## Discerning (50 mins)

*"The purpose of the synod ... is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts and restore strength to our hands for our common mission"*

*Vatican's Synod Preparation Document, #1.3*

### In small groups – Share together:

- What might the Spirit of God be saying to us through our reflection on the experiences we have shared of journeying together?
- What steps might the Spirit of God be inviting us to take in order to make our communities more welcoming, inclusive and missionary?
- What can the process of Synodality teach your community? What may the Holy Spirit inspire in the community that can remain after a Synod is over?

Pope Francis writes of the need to ensure the Church's "customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures" are geared towards mission not self preservation. (*The Joy of the Gospel / Evangelii Gaudium* #27)

- What 'ways of doing things' may the Spirit of God be calling us to change?

*Each small group sharing should conclude by deciding the verbal contribution they wish to share back to the large group.*

## Conclusion

Lord Jesus  
I give you my hands to do your work  
I give you my feet to go your way  
I give you my eyes to see as you do  
I give you my tongue to speak your words  
I give you my mind that you may think in me  
I give you my spirit that you may pray in me  
Above all, I give you my heart  
that you may love in me  
your Father and all mankind  
I give you my whole self that you may grow in me  
so that it is you Lord Jesus  
who live and work and pray in me. **Amen**  
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# After Sunday Mass: Three sessions of Group Listening

## Session one

### Getting started

- Who are you and where are you from?
- How are you as we begin this conversation?

### Reflecting on 'journeying together' during the pandemic (35 mins)

*The Holy Father is offering us the opportunity to participate in a time of listening and reflecting. He hopes this will help us to discern how God's presence comes into our lives and what the Spirit of God is prompting us to do anew, so that we might be more alive and creative in our response to the call of Jesus, our Way, Truth and Life.*  
*Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Pastoral Letter, 3 October 2021*

- What has been your experience of 'journeying together' these last eighteen months – as parish/community?
  - What strengths did I find in my faith and faith community? How was I disappointed or sorrowful? In what ways did the grace of God most clearly touch and uplift me?
- How effectively has your Parish / community 'journeyed' with others, including those Catholics who no longer participate in your community, those who are not Catholic, and those experiencing poverty, hardship or exclusion?

*Each small group sharing should conclude by deciding the contribution they wish to share back to the large group.*

### Conclusion & Prayer

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I give you my whole self that you may grow in me  
so that it is you Lord Jesus  
who live and work and pray in me. **Amen**  
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# After Sunday Mass: Three sessions of Group Listening

## Session Two

### Getting started (5 minutes)

- How are you as we begin this conversation?
- What did you appreciate about the last session? How has the experience of listening to one another impacted you since then?

### Reflecting on 'journeying together' – Communion Participation and Mission (30 mins)

*"By journeying together and reflecting together on the journey that has been made, the Church will be able to learn through her experience which processes can help her to live communion, to achieve participation, to open herself to mission." Synod Preparatory Document, 1*

#### Communion (10 mins)

In small groups – share together

- Thinking about the pandemic, and perhaps more broadly, how do you experience the Church community journeying together? When does this bring joy? When might it bring pain or sadness?
- What has the experience of 'journeying together' taught us about what it means to be Church? When we say 'our Church', who is part of it?

#### Participation (10 mins)

In small groups – share together

- How does your particular Church community ensure you are part of the 'journey'? How does the community include you? How does it not?
- Who is missing on this journey? Whom do we need to listen to?

#### Mission (10 mins)

In small groups – share together

- What would you wish to celebrate about how your parish/community lives its mission?
- How does your community decide priorities for mission?
- What areas of mission are we neglecting?

*In a large gathering each small group sharing should conclude by deciding the contribution they wish to share back to the large group.*

### Conclusion & Prayer

Lord Jesus, I give you my hands to do your work  
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# After Sunday Mass: Three sessions of Group Listening

## Session Three

### Getting started

- How are you as we begin this conversation?
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### Discerning (30 mins)

*“The purpose of the synod ... is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts and restore strength to our hands for our common mission”*

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### In small groups – Share together:

- What might the Spirit of God be saying to us through our reflection on these experiences of journeying together?
- What steps might the Spirit of God be inviting us to take in order to make our communities more welcoming, inclusive and missionary?
- What can the process of Synodality teach your community? What may the Holy Spirit inspire in the community that can remain after a Synod is over?

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# Parish / Community Listening Day

## Session one

### Getting started

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## The Call to Listen to God's Spirit

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- Are you ready to listen to other people gathered here today?
- Are you prepared to encounter the Spirit of God in others?
- What would stop you from being open to listening?
- How might your own agenda stop you from hearing the Spirit in others?

### In small groups - share together:

- What is your experience of listening to God? Do you have an awareness of the Holy Spirit within you?
- To what extent are you open to listening deeply to others today? Are you open to being surprised by God today?

## Scripture The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52)

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### In small groups – Share together:

- What strikes you about the characters and how they respond to the situation?
- What do their attitude and actions evoke for you about your experience of the Church today?

### Break

## Session Two

### Reflecting on 'journeying together' during the pandemic

*"Now that there is greater normality in daily life, we have a unique opportunity to refresh and maybe reshape these patterns of life in the Church. In starting what can be described as a 'Church-wide listening process' Pope Francis is inviting us to listen again to each other, hearing experiences of faith with all its joys and disappointments, and to find new ways of strengthening each other."*

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### Break

## Session Three

### Communion (20 mins)

#### **In small groups – share together.** (Read all the questions first and then begin to share.)

- Thinking about the pandemic, and perhaps more broadly, how do you experience the Church community journeying together? When does this bring joy? When might it bring pain or sadness?
- What has the experience of 'journeying together' taught us about what it means to be Church? When we say 'our Church', who is part of it?

### Participation (20 mins)

#### **In small groups – share together.** (Read all the questions first and then begin to share.)

- How does your particular Church community ensure you are part of the 'journey'? How does the community include you? How does it not?

- How does it include others? Who is missing on this journey? Whom do we need to listen to?
- How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued and the way to reach them? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice?

### **Mission (20 mins)**

***In small groups – share together.*** (Read all the questions first and then begin to share.)

- What would you wish to celebrate about how your parish/community lives its mission?
- How does your community decide priorities for mission?
- Where do you see people in your parish/community living out the Church's mission in their own lives and work? How does your parish/community support them?
- What areas of mission are we neglecting?
- In what ways is our partnership with people beyond the Church developing?

*Each small group sharing should conclude by deciding the contribution they wish to share back to the large group.*

### **Break**

## **Discerning**

*"The purpose of the synod ... is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts and restore strength to our hands for our common mission"*

*Vatican's Synod Preparation Document, #1.3*

### **In small groups – Share together:**

- What might the Spirit of God be saying to us through our reflection on the experiences we have shared of journeying together?
- What steps might the Spirit of God be inviting us to take in order to make our communities more welcoming, inclusive and missionary?
- What can the process of Synodality teach your community? What may the Holy Spirit inspire in the community that can remain after a Synod is over?

Pope Francis writes of the need to ensure the Church's "customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures" are geared towards mission not self preservation. (*The Joy of the Gospel / Evangelii Gaudium #27*)

- What 'ways of doing things' may the Spirit of God be calling us to change?

*Each small group sharing should conclude by deciding the verbal contribution they wish to share back to the large group.*



## Conclusion & Prayer

Lord Jesus  
I give you my hands to do your work  
I give you my feet to go your way  
I give you my eyes to see as you do  
I give you my tongue to speak your words  
I give you my mind that you may think in me  
I give you my spirit that you may pray in me  
Above all, I give you my heart  
that you may love in me  
your Father and all mankind  
I give you my whole self that you may grow in me  
so that it is you Lord Jesus  
who live and work and pray in me. **Amen**  
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# Simple parish/community session

## Connecting

- Who are you and where are you from?
- How are you as we begin this conversation?

## Introduction & Prayer

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.

## Scripture The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52)

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus stood still and said, 'Call him here.' And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; get up, he is calling you.' So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'My teacher, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has made you well.' Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

### In small groups – Share together:

- What strikes you about the characters and how they respond to the situation?
- What do their attitude and actions evoke for you about your experience of the Church today?

## The Call to Listen to God's Spirit

*"Synodality is the way of being the Church today according to the will of God, in a dynamic of discerning and listening together to the voice of the Holy Spirit."*

*Pope Francis, 17 October 2015*

**Quiet reflection:**

Pope Francis is asking all of us to gather together to consider how we journey together in the world today. At the heart of this is the invitation to listen to what God may be saying to us about our journeying. This means listening to the Spirit of God in Scripture, in the life of the Church and **also** in the hearts of each one of us. Because we believe that we are all temples of and gifted by the Holy Spirit.

- Are you ready to listen to other people gathered here today?
- Are you prepared to encounter the Spirit of God in others?
- What would stop you from being open to listen?
- How might your own agenda stop you from hearing the Spirit in others?

**Share in pairs/threes with those near to you:**

- To what extent are you open to listening deeply to others today? Are you open to being surprised by God today?

**Reflecting on 'journeying together'**

*"Now that there is greater normality in daily life, we have a unique opportunity to refresh and maybe reshape these patterns of life in the Church. Indeed, Pope Francis is asking us to do so. In starting what can be described as a 'Church-wide listening process' he is inviting us to listen again to each other, hearing experiences of faith with all its joys and disappointments, and to find new ways of strengthening each other."*

*Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Pastoral Letter 3 October 2021*

**Reflecting on the experience of the pandemic (20 mins)**

In small groups – share together

- What has been your experience of 'journeying together' these last eighteen months – as parish/community?
  - What strengths did I find in my faith and faith community? How was I disappointed or sorrowful? In what ways did the grace of God most clearly touch and uplift me?

**Communion, Participation, Mission (30 mins)**

In small groups – share together. Take each 'pair' of questions together. Read them first and then begin to share. Spend about 10 minutes on each pair of questions.

**Communion**

- Thinking about the pandemic, and perhaps more broadly, when does journeying together in the Church bring joy? When might it bring pain or sadness?
- What has the experience of 'journeying together' taught us about what it means to be Church?

**Participation**

- When we say 'our Church', who is part of it?
- Who is missing on this journey? Whom do we need to listen to?

**Mission**

- What would you wish to celebrate about how your parish/community lives its mission?
- How does your community decide priorities for mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting?

## Discerning

*"The purpose of the synod ... is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts and restore strength to our hands for our common mission"*

*Vatican's Synod Preparatory Document, #1.3*

### In small groups – Share together: (15 mins)

- What might the Spirit of God be saying to us through our reflection on these experiences of journeying together?

Pope Francis writes of the need to ensure the Church's "customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures" are geared towards mission not self preservation. (*The Joy of the Gospel / Evangelii Gaudium #27*)

- What 'ways of doing things' may the Spirit of God be calling us to change? **(10 Mins)**

## Conclusion & Prayer

Lord Jesus  
I give you my hands to do your work  
I give you my feet to go your way  
I give you my eyes to see as you do  
I give you my tongue to speak your words  
I give you my mind that you may think in me  
I give you my spirit that you may pray in me  
Above all, I give you my heart  
that you may love in me  
your Father and all mankind  
I give you my whole self that you may grow in me  
so that it is you Lord Jesus  
who live and work and pray in me. **Amen**  
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