

# Towards October 2024

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## Gathering One

'The Lord will guide us and help us to be a more synodal and missionary Church, a Church that adores God and serves the women and men of our time, going forth to bring everyone the consoling joy of the Gospel.'

(Pope Francis, Homily at the Closing Mass of the Synod,  
29<sup>th</sup> October 2023)

## Synod 2021-2024



## Welcome the Word

Begin with the Sign of the Cross

Then read:

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were... Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you', and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you' After saying this he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit'

(John 20: 19 – 22)

Pause for reflection

Pray the Adsumus Prayer together:

### Adsumus 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.

## Co-Responsibility

Two dominant themes of the Synthesis Report from the First Session of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023 were Co-responsibility and Formation. We would like to offer a few thoughts as to how what was said about these two themes informs our discussion of how we might better organize ourselves for mission. In the leaflet for Gathering Two, we will consider Formation; for Gathering One, this Gathering, Co-responsibility.



"Each Christian is a mission on this earth." (8b) That statement best captures the meaning of Co-responsibility. It means every member of the Body of Christ has a unique mission to proclaim Christ. It is in this sense that we understand that all – lay and consecrated women and men, deacons, priests and bishops – share a responsibility for the Church's mission. They have each received different charisms and vocations, and exercise different roles and functions. But each has a unique mission. And "pastoral structures need to be reorganized so they can readily recognize, call forth and animate lay charisms and ministries, inserting them into the missionary dynamism of the ... Church." (8l)

We need, therefore, to deepen relationships within communities, foster "a communion of loving, non-competitive relationships in Christ"; call one another "to a co-responsibility to be expressed at every level of the Church." (9b) The challenge is to reorganize the way we relate and structure ourselves so as to enable "the participation and contribution of all." (9g) We are called to reorganize ourselves so as to communicate that we are, as Pope Francis puts it, indeed "a people convened and called with the strength of the Beatitudes." (9g)

Take a moment now to reflect on these words from the Synod

## Conversation in the Spirit

The method we will use in our gatherings is called "Conversation in the Spirit". It is the method we used in the first stage of our Diocesan Synodal Journey, as we learnt how to speak and how to listen from the heart. It was used to great effect in the month-long Synod in Rome.

The Synthesis affirms its value: "Conversation in the Spirit is a tool that, even with its limitations, enables authentic listening in order to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. Its practice has elicited joy, awe and gratitude and has been experienced as a path of renewal that transforms individuals, groups, and the Church. The word "conversation" expresses more than mere dialogue: it interweaves thought and feeling, creating a shared vital space. That is why we can say that conversion is at play in conversation ... Conversing "in the Spirit" means living the experience of sharing in the light of faith and seeking God's will in an authentically evangelical atmosphere within which the Holy Spirit's unmistakable voice can be heard." (2d)

The way we wish you to have Conversations in the Spirit at this Gathering is as follows. Whatever the size of the whole group please divide into groups of 5 or 6. Choose a facilitator, and a scribe for recording what is shared. Each table may have a stone or other 'listening piece'. The facilitator should proceed in the following way: ask everyone to be still for 3 minutes; then read to the group



Questions 1 and 2 which we are going to consider; explain the procedure:

- ▷ One person will volunteer to begin speaking
- ▷ This first speaker should take the stone and share their thoughts on the first question
- ▷ They should speak for no more than 3 minutes
- ▷ The facilitator will give notice once they are approaching 3 minutes then ask them to end
- ▷ The first speaker then passes the stone to the person on their left, who does the same
- ▷ Once everybody has spoken, we sit still for 3 minutes' silent reflection
- ▷ Then we do the same for the second question

This should take an hour or so in total.

## The Conversation

**Q.1:** How do we witness as a Parish and proclaim our faith to:

- ▷ those who have never heard of Christ;
- ▷ those who have ceased walking with Christ;
- ▷ those with whom we worship Christ (those who go to church)?

**Q.2:** How should we organise ourselves as a Parish to do this more effectively?

Make time for each group to give their feedback

## Closing Prayer

Close with praying together the Our Father:.

Our Father, Who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be Thy Name.  
Thy Kingdom come.  
Thy Will be done,  
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass  
against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. Amen

