

The Synodal Path: Descriptors

‘It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.’ Pope Francisⁱ



1. **No one's left out.** The WHOLE people of God journey together. If they are baptized, they belong to the family of God. That means, for example, the baptized who are nones, dones, loosely affiliated, “free range” Catholics, divorced and re-married, LGBTQ+, legal and illegal immigrants, people of color, infants, children, youth, teens, adults and elders, previously incarcerated, and the addicted all have a seat. It means this human experience is more important than ideas.
2. **The Holy Spirit's in charge.** The Holy Spirit guides, teaches, corrects and surprises. That means decision-makers practice listening for and to that still, small voice. That means the only agenda is carrying out what God wants. It means listening for that voice coming from many peoples, situations and disciplines. It means doing what the Spirit indicates is right, being faithful to God and to serving God's people as beacons of hope.
3. **Thinking like Jesus is required.** All the baptized embrace ongoing conversion. That means there is ongoing, open engagement with the word of God and full, conscious and active participation in the Eucharist because both are catalysts for conversion. That means the faithful come to worship fully prepared to meet Christ in the Eucharist. Participants must be willing to change perspectives and practices based on what they hear from Christ and from others, leaving behind prejudices, stereotypes, complacency and comfort.
4. **Listening to truth spoken in love is necessary.** Those seeking to participate in the Church embrace authentic listening. That means the baptized are taught how to listen, how to speak truth in love, how to respond seeking understanding and how to respect multiple points of view. That means those leading, ministering and serving in the parish are especially formed for this holy work.
5. **Humility and honesty are critical.** Leaders exhibit humility and honesty, atoning for wounds they have caused and wounds caused by others holding similar ministerial positions. That means discerning woundedness and embracing the many steps to reform. It means seeking the truth and speaking the truth, always respecting others' dignity.

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6. **It's about BOTH the clergy and the baptized as agents for the Spirit.** The synodal culture is one that holds the creative tension between the Spirit working through all the baptized and the same Spirit working through the hierarchy. That means it is not either/or but both/and, always searching for God's will rather than seeking to build power structures or force ideas. Clericalism gives way to an active embrace of the many charisms the Holy Spirit has given the Body of Christ.ⁱⁱ
7. **Systems and structures must change.** That means the institutional Church intends to re-shape those systems and structures whose nature denies participation, excludes many voices and removes responsibility for the mission of the Church. That means an honest assessment of policies, processes, and people in light of this call to create a participative, inclusive and co-responsible church. That means leading change, perhaps cutting programs and stepping outside of the box.
8. **Forget fast.** Speaking with courage and honesty and listening to understand both what the other person is saying AND what the Spirit is saying will take time. Seeing clearly what the Spirit is revealing will take time.ⁱⁱⁱ
9. **Stop trying to go it alone, being all things to all people.** Every parish is not the entire Body of Christ. Self-sufficiency, redundancy, and competition impede learning together, journeying together and serving together. Build bridges, collaborate, share, and serve as one Body in Christ.
10. **Dream with God.** That means actively imagining a future filled with the joy of the Gospel. It means creatively embracing God's call to us to co-create the Kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven, now!

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Dare to Dream with God...guided by Pope Francis' call to the synodal way: actively imagine a future filled with participation, communion and mission! Dare to embrace the #synodjourney.

ⁱ Francis, *Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops*, 17 October 2015, AAS 107 (2015) 1139.

ⁱⁱ "Principles of a Synodal Process " summarized from the *Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*. Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Regina, Regina SK, Canada. <https://archregina.sk.ca/sites/default/files/synod/Principles-of-a-Synodal-Process.pdf> Accessed 6-10-22.

ⁱⁱⁱ Robert W. McElroy. "Bishop McElroy: Pope Francis and Vatican II give us a road map for the synodal process." *America*. May 31, 2022. <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/05/31/mcelroy-synodality-francis-continuity-243077> Accessed 6-10-22.