

## Synodal Conversation Guidelines and Process

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*“The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.”*

Church in the Modern World, Vatican, Dec. 7, 1965

Vatican II reminded us that whatever is going on in the hearts of God’s people, matters to the Church. We go through these experiences together as members of the Body of Christ. This reflection is a helpful starting point as we enter into our synodal conversations in our setting and throughout the universal Catholic Church.

The official synod document (paragraph #26) states that the fundamental question that guides this consultation of and conversation with the People of God is the following:

A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.” How is this “journeying together” happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

We will be using the Simple Sharing method of taking turns speaking, listening carefully for understanding, and not responding to anyone’s comments. It is more helpful to speak in specifics than in generalities; avoid sweeping generalizations while speaking your own truth.

*Confidentiality: To make this a safe place to share, we ask that you observe confidentiality within your table. You may share ideas of what you heard later but you may not identify who said what. Records will be taking notes, but names will not be attached to what you or anyone says. Thank you for honoring this request for the safety of everyone.*

#### Ground Rules for Synodal Conversations

1. **Be Here Now** – Give full attention to each other as you pay attention to the movements of your heart and listen for the Spirit of God.
2. **Listen for Understanding** – Take to heart what is expressed by others, and thoughtfully consider and express what you want to say.
3. **One at a Time** – 1 person speaks; everyone else gives the gift of listening without judgment.
4. **Everyone Speaks Once before Anyone Speaks Again** – you may pass and speak later.
5. **Speak Your Truth and Let Others Speak Theirs** – Say “I am, I feel, I think, I need to, etc.” instead of “They are, they think, they feel, etc.” There will be no discussion, feedback, or comments after each person speaks. There will be moments of silence in the conversation to digest what has been expressed and how it relates to our own thoughts and feelings.

## Here is how our Synodal Conversations will happen

- Each table has a recorder to assist with the process. (raise their hands.) They will not be responding to the questions. They will help keep us on track and listen well to one another.
- The recorder will write down what's said as accurately as possible. Afterwards their notes will be compiled and made available to everyone present. All notes will be recorded anonymously, so there's no record of who said what, only what was said. Recorders will try to best capture what was said. The recorder may ask the person who spoke to rephrase, clarify, or repeat.

There will be four conversations in response to the synodal questions below.

Each of these conversations will follow the simple sharing process with no comments or feedback after each person speaks, other than a simple thank you from the facilitator. If a table participant goes off topic, the Table Facilitator will help get the conversation back on track.

### **1. What experiences in your particular Church does this fundamental question call to mind?**

Silent Reflection and brief response: *As I listened, what I heard was...*

### **2. As you listened and reflected, respond to the following in greater depth:**

- What joys did these experiences provoke?
- What difficulties and obstacles have these experiences encountered?
- What wounds and healings have these experiences brought to light?
- What insights have these experiences elicited?

Silent Reflection and brief response: *As I listened, what I heard was...*

### **3. Gather the fruits to share:**

- Where in these experiences does the voice of the Spirit resound?
- What might the spirit be asking of us?
- What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects for change, and the steps to be taken?
- Where do we find a growing consensus in our conversation?
- What paths are opening up for our particular Church?

Silent Reflection and brief response: *As I listened, what I heard was...*

### **4. Gratitude Conversation – complete one or both of these prompts**

I am glad I was here because... or One gift I received in this conversation is...