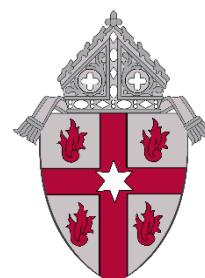




Synod
2021
2023

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission



Catholic Diocese of
SAGINAW

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

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GATHERING PRAYER

NOTE: Each parish is encouraged to insert their custom gathering prayer into this space before printing for the listening session.

Opening Song – All Are Welcome

Reading

Acts 2:1-11, 14-19

Silent Reflection

Prayer for the Synod (All)

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.

Introduction: Journeying Together

The entire Catholic Church is called to participate in the upcoming Synod of Bishops. This Synod is entitled: "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission."

Pope Francis has called the entire People of God to journey together. This Synod is not just another meeting with oral presentations and written reports. It is a process of journeying together by listening, dialoguing, praying, discerning, and making decisions together for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Pope Francis is asking each local diocese to gather - clergy, religious and laity together- to listen to each other's joys and hopes, and griefs and anxieties (c.f. Gaudium et Spes no. 1). The "goal" of this journeying together is not to create a new vision or pastoral plan with objectives. Rather, the goal of our journeying together is to be present with one another, to listen and learn with each other, and to grow closer to the Lord and His Church.

Additional information:

- Vatican Synod website <https://www.synod.va/en.html>
- USCCB Synod website <https://www.usccb.org/synod>
- Saginaw Diocese Synod website <https://www.saginaw.org/synod2023>

Overview of Listening Session

Start Time (minutes)	Duration (minutes)	Description	Comments
	5	Gathering Prayer	
	10	Welcome, Introduction, and Overview of the Synod	Pastor or DPL to welcome participants. The Parish Group Coordinator is host for the event.
	5	Participant Ground Rules	Host
	45-60	Small Group Discussion: The Fundamental Question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Round #1 (15-20 minutes) - Round #2 (15-20 minutes) - Group Discernment (15-20 minutes) 	Facilitators at each table
	15-30	Large Group Feedback	Each table shares the Group Discernment
	5	Sending Forth Prayer	Ask participants to complete an evaluation form before leaving. Can include closing comments from Pastor or DPL or Host before the final prayer.

NOTE: Each parish is encouraged to insert their custom agenda into this page before printing for the listening session.

Participant Ground Rules

- We are here today to have a **DIALOGUE** or a conversation to build relationships and exchange perspectives between participants. We want to expand our possibilities by helping to reflect on our collective experiences. Please avoid arguing or comments that seek to advance a personal agenda.
- We will treat what anyone says with reverence and respect.
- During individual sharing, one person speaks at a time, uninterrupted.
- We will listen with an open mind.
- We only speak once until everyone has had an opportunity to share.
- Respect the times of silence when we stop the sharing to reflect and pray.
- When we report themes and experiences it will be done without attributing specific comments to individual participants.

The role of facilitators is to guide the conversations. Please follow their instructions. They will be taking notes. The notes from all the small groups at your parish listening sessions will be summarized into one parish report. This parish listening session report will be sent to the diocese where the Diocesan Synod Team will create a summary of all parish and affiliated groups listening sessions. This summary report will be the foundation of the diocesan listening sessions to be held on June 7, 2022. A final ten-page diocesan report will be compiled and sent to the USCCB by June 30, 2022.

Small Group Discussion – Round #1

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. (c.f. Preparatory Document no. 27)

Take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet. In your reflection on "journeying together," think about:

- What are your experiences of journeying together in communion, participation, and mission in our local Church?
- What experiences bring you joy and help you grow in your relationship with Jesus?
- What difficulties or obstacles have you encountered? What wounds did these experiences reveal?

Group sharing: Remember, each person shares without interruption, while other group members listen.

Small Group Discussion – Round #2


“The meaning of the journey to which we are all called is above all that of discovering the face and form of a Synodal Church, in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit.” (Preparatory Document no. 15)

During your reflection, take a moment to write down your personal thoughts and reflection in your booklet. In your reflection focus on “how God is speaking to us through the voices in our midst.”

- What insights have the experiences shared sparked?
- What do you think our parish does well that we need to continue doing?
- What do you think would make our parish better?
- Who else do we need to reach out to, listen to, or include whose voice is not being heard?

Group sharing: Remember, each person shares without interruption, while other group members listen.

Group Discernment

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13) The Holy Spirit sent by Christ and received in our Baptism and Confirmation guides our efforts, breathes life and vitality into the Church, and leads us into a deeper relationship with Jesus and deeper communion with the Church in order to proclaim the Gospel. This Synodal journey is guided by the Holy Spirit (c.f. Vademecum 1.2) 

During your reflection, take a moment to write down in your booklet one or two key insights where you heard the voice of the Holy Spirit today.

- What key message from our discussion is the Holy Spirit guiding us toward?
- To what minority opinion(s) is the Holy Spirit calling us to further consider?

Listening Process Experience

- To end the small group session, spend the last 5-10 minutes giving feedback on the “listening” process.

Large Group Feedback

- Each facilitator will share a summary of the group discernment.

Prayer for the Synod

Adsumus Sancte Spiritus

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.

Evaluation

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How well has the listening session allowed you the opportunity to share your own experience of Church?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are your hopes for the Church as we “journey together” in terms of communion, participation, and mission?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What practical suggestions do you have for your faith community to continue to be a more listening, discerning, and participatory Church?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What groups, minorities, or marginalized segments of our community do we still need to reach to hear their voice?

Name (optional) _____