



2023 Synod on Synodality Diocesan Phase Parish Listening Sessions Guide

OVERVIEW

The following is an outline of the parish listening sessions:

- 1) Every parish is required to have at least one (1) listening session or as many as the pastor considers necessary between mid-February and mid- April.
- 2) The date chosen for the parish listening session should be chosen to maximize participation. Please submit the time and date of the session (s) for publication on the diocesan synod web page by March 4, 2022, using the following link: <https://fwdioc.org/date-and-time-for-parish-listening-sessions>
- 3) The listening session is to begin and end in the church.
- 4) In preparation for the listening session(s) each parish is to designate a parish contact person, as well as facilitators and note takers for the small group discussion.
- 5) Each parish should assign one contact person who will serve to collect and summarize the notes from the listening session(s) and submit them to the diocese according to the diocesan collection form by April 15, 2022. The form is available on the web page or using this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ParishSummaryReport>
- 6) Information concerning the participants, outlined on the information collection form, should also be gathered by the contact person.

DIOCESAN PREPARATORY DOCUMENT

As a preparation for the listening session, please provide the preparatory document to those who will participate a suitable length of time before the listening session. The copy is available in the **appendix I Preparatory document.**

OUTLINE OF THE LISTENING SESSION

- 1) Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
- 2) Gospel Reading: Mark 10:46-52, observing the attitude of the different characters, what it evokes of the Church as we know it, and then how Jesus allows the excluded Bartimaeus to walk forward with everyone. Or Luke 24:13-35, seeing Jesus transform the disciples' disappointment into missionary joy and dynamism on the road to Emmaus, as he made their hearts burn within them, walking with them on the way.)
- 3) Reminder of the main themes of the preparatory document

- a. The Vademecum notes that:
Synodal listening is oriented towards discernment. It requires us to learn and exercise the art of personal and communal discernment. We listen to each other, to our faith tradition, and to the signs of the times in order to discern what God is saying to all of us. Pope Francis characterizes the two interrelated goals of this process of listening: “to listen to God, so that with him we may hear the cry of his people; to listen to his people until we are in harmony with the will to which God calls us.

This kind of discernment is not only a one-time exercise, but ultimately a way of life, grounded in Christ, following the lead of the Holy Spirit, living for the greater glory of God. Communal discernment helps to build flourishing and resilient communities for the mission of the Church today. Discernment is a grace from God, but it requires our human involvement in simple ways: praying, reflecting, paying attention to one’s inner disposition, listening and talking to one another in an authentic, meaningful, and welcoming way.

- b. As on any journey, we need to be aware of possible pitfalls that could hamper our progress during this time of synodality. The following are several pitfalls that must be avoided in order to promote the vitality and fruitfulness of the Synodal Process.
 - i. The temptation of wanting to lead ourselves instead of being led by God.
 - ii. The temptation to focus on ourselves and our immediate concerns.
 - iii. The temptation to only see “problems.”
 - iv. The temptation of focusing only on structures.
 - v. The temptation not to look beyond the visible confines of the Church.
 - vi. The temptation to lose focus of the objectives of the Synodal Process.
 - vii. The temptation of conflict and division.
 - viii. The temptation to treat the Synod as a kind of a parliament.
 - ix. The temptation to listen only to those who are already involved in Church activities.

4) Time for silent meditation and listening

5) Reading of the Fundamental question (from the *Preparatory Document* for the 2023 Synod of Bishops):

- a. A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.” How is this “journeying together” happening today in our local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”? (Preparatory Document, 26)—“**Journeys together**” can be understood as living a life of faith orientated toward God, neighbor, and self in the midst of the Church and world.
- b. In responding to this question, we are invited to:
 - i. **Recall our own experiences:** What experiences of our local Church does this question call to mind?

- ii. **Re-read these experiences in greater depth:** What joys did they bring to? What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds did they reveal? What insights have they elicited?
 - iii. **Gather the fruits to share:** Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound? What is the Spirit asking of us? What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects for change, the steps to be taken? Where do we register a consensus? What paths are opening up for our local Church?
- 6) Break into small discussion groups
 - 7) Listening and conversation based on the “fundamental question”
 - 8) Reassembly with presentation of main themes from small groups
 - 9) Benediction and Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament

GENERAL DIRECTIVES

- 1) The pastor or priest assigned to the parish should be present for the listening session and is responsible for making sure the notes from the listening session are sent to the diocese.
- 2) Each small group should have a person assigned to take notes.
- 3) Each small group should have a person assigned to read the question and help facilitate the conversation.
- 4) For the return to the large group, there should be one person assigned to facilitate the presentation of main themes that emerge during the small group sharing.
- 5) Each parish should have one person who will summarize the main themes from the discussion and submit them to the diocese.
- 6) The entire process is estimated to take ninety (90) minutes but may be longer or shorter according to each local situation.
- 7) The objective of the listening session is that all the participants both speak and listen to each other. The conversation is not directed at a single individual or group.
- 8) We have provided additional topics for further discussion if time allows (See core questions in **Questions Guide for listening session(s)**)
- 9) After the parish listening sessions are completed the Pastor or designated contact person is to nominate two parishioners as delegates to represent the parish at the Diocesan Pre-synodal meeting no later than April 30, 2022. The form for nominations is available on the diocesan synod webpage._
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DelegateNominationForm>