



# 2023 Synod on Synodality Diocesan Phase Preparatory Document Listening sessions

## APPENDIX I

### PREPARATORY DOCUMENT

As we move forward in our “journeying together”, Pope Francis has asked that our first action be one of examining how well we are listening to and the will of our Heavenly Father and as Christ’s Church bringing the Love of Christ into the presence of our world. So, let us be mindful of the guidance we have received in the *Vademecum*:

“It is especially important that this listening process happen in a spiritual setting that supports openness in sharing as well as hearing. For this reason, you are encouraged to root the local experience of the Synodal Process in meditation on Scripture, the liturgy, and prayer. In this way, our journey of listening to one another can be an authentic experience of discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit. Authentic discernment is made possible where there is time for deep reflection and a spirit of mutual trust, common faith, and a shared purpose.”

Let us begin by praying the prayer that the *Vademecum* recommended us to pray before every meeting we undertake on our journey together:

*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.*

Our mission as Christ’s Church requires that we walk forward in communion with God and one another as we rely upon each member fulfilling their crucial role and participating in unity with each other. This is an ongoing process of engagement which enables us to remain a synodal Church living in, with and through communion.

The *Vademecum* stated, “the objective of this Synodal Process is not only a series of exercises that start and stop, but rather a journey of growing authentically towards the communion and mission that God calls the Church to live out in the third millennium”. This is why our first task is to examine how we currently listen to God and to one another. The theme of the Synod is “For

a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission” which identifies three interrelated dimensions, **communion**, **participation**, and **mission** that enrich and orient one another, and which are all grounded through authentic listening.

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.

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.

- 1) The temptation of wanting to lead ourselves instead of being led by God.
- 2) The temptation to focus on ourselves and our immediate concerns.
- 3) The temptation to only see “problems.”
- 4) The temptation of focusing only on structures.
- 5) The temptation not to look beyond the visible confines of the Church.
- 6) The temptation to lose focus of the objectives of the Synodal Process.
- 7) The temptation of conflict and division.
- 8) The temptation to treat the Synod as a kind of a parliament.
- 9) The temptation to listen only to those who are already involved in Church activities.

With all of this in mind, the focus of our discussion for this phase of the Synodal Process will be on the following questions:

### **Listening to God**

- 1) How do I and the community of faith I represent currently strive to listen to and discern Our Heavenly Father’s will for us, guided by the Holy Spirit?

- 2) What do we currently do to avoid the pitfalls noted above in our listening to Our Heavenly Father?
- 3) How do the possible pitfalls still affect our listening to discerning and being obedient to Our Heavenly Father's will for us?

### Listening to one another as the Diocese of Fort Worth

- 1) How do I and the community of faith I represent currently strive to listen to and discern what others are striving to communicate to us, while remaining grounded in faith in Jesus Christ and guided by the grace of the Holy Spirit?
- 2) What do we currently do to avoid the pitfalls noted above in our listening to and discern others are striving to communicate to us, while remaining grounded in faith in Jesus Christ and guided by the grace of the Holy Spirit?
- 3) How do the possible pitfalls still affect our listening to and discerning what others are striving to communicate to us, while striving to remain grounded in our faith in Jesus Christ and guided by the grace of the Holy Spirit?

### Glossary:

- **“JOURNEYING TOGETHER”:** can be understood as living a life of faith orientated toward God, neighbor, and self in the midst of the Church and world.
- **SYNOD:** Synod is a greek word (synodos) meaning a meeting or assembly. The two Greek words that make up synod are syn meaning together and hodos meaning way or journey.
- **SYNODALITY:** The term is often used to describe the process of fraternal collaboration and discernment that bodies like the synod were created to express. It is a structured conversation among all of the relevant ecclesial players—bishops, priests, and laity—for the sake of hearing the voice of the Spirit.
- **VADEMECUM:** A handbook or guide that is kept constantly at hand for consultation.