

# Archdiocese of Santa Fe Synod Guidebook



**for Parish Synodal Teams  
and Ministry Groups**



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This *Guidebook* provides the very basics of the upcoming Synod Process, *For a Synodal Church...Communion, Participation, and Mission*, synthesized from the information provided by the USCCB and the *Vademecum*, issued by the Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops from the Holy See, September 2021. It is intended as an introductory resource for parishes, catholic schools, ministry groups as well as ecumenical groups. It is not intended to be comprehensive, only to offer an introduction and overview.

Synod Website: [www.synod.va/en.html](http://www.synod.va/en.html)

**GENERAL OVERVIEW OF SYNODAL PROCESS**  
**FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH...COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION, AND MISSION**

“Dialogue is our method, not as a shrewd strategy but out of fidelity to the One who never wearies of visiting the marketplace, even at the eleventh hour, to propose his offer of love (Mt 20:1-16). The path ahead, then, is dialogue among yourselves, dialogue in your presbyterates, dialogue with lay persons, dialogue with families, dialogue with society. I cannot ever tire of encouraging you to dialogue fearlessly. The richer the heritage which you are called to share with *parrhesia*, the more eloquent should be the humility with which you should offer it.”

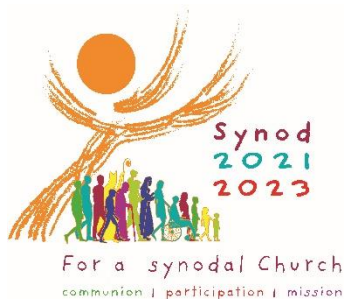
- Pope Francis

The calling of this synod is well aligned with the challenge Pope Francis offered his brother bishops to “dialogue fearlessly.” The Holy Father has made a request of the People of God to participate as fully and authentically as possible in the synodal process. The ask is accompanied by a desire for a quick response. This may appear a bit daunting; however, it allows room for the spirit of a synod – a lively, “participative and inclusive ecclesial process.”

It is a Church-wide Synod, and the People of God are called to ‘journey together’ which “occurs in two deeply interconnected ways. First, we journey together with one another as the People of God. Next, we journey together as the People of God with the entire human family. These two perspectives enrich one another and are helpful for our common discernment towards deeper communion and more fruitful mission.”

The center of the synodal experience is found in a series of local meetings or consultations, where the local Church listens together to answer this fundamental question:

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



**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.

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*, the first word of the original Latin, meaning, “We stand before You, Holy Spirit,” which has been historically used at Councils, Synods, and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, and is attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 - 4 April 636). As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace. For the Synodal journey from 2021 to 2023, we propose to the following simplified version,<sup>1</sup> so that any group or liturgical assembly can pray it more easily.

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<sup>1</sup> The original version of the *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus* can be found on the Synod website.

## STEPS FOR THE SYNODAL PROCESS

These steps are a general outline of the process as adapted from documents provided from the USCCB and the *Vademecum* (handbook) provided by the Holy See. They are not necessarily linear; some may happen simultaneously, and some may happen in various orders. These steps are also applicable to Catholic Schools, Ministry Groups, Ecumenical groups, etc.

- Appoint the Parish Co-Leaders – These individuals should work closely with the pastor to help lead the synodal team in the parish process. You may wish to consider the officers of your parish pastoral council, mayordomos, etc.
- Invite and form a Parish Synodal Team – A parish synodal team will aid the pastor in conducting the process and gathering the information. This team could consist of members of your parish pastoral council or other parish consultative bodies. If you do not have a formed parish pastoral council, your parish synodal team may also consist of active parish ministers. The full roster of your synodal team is due to the Executive Office of the Pastoral Ministries Division by November 22, 2021.
- The Parish Synodal Team – There is no recommended number for the parish synodal team; however, it should be representative of:
  - Lay people (men and women)
  - Clergy and consecrated religious
  - Cultures
  - Generations
  - Ministries and charisms
  - Socio-economic status

*Note:* Particular attention should be paid towards the inclusivity of young people, families, migrants and refugees, and the poor.

- Commissioning of Parish Synodal Team – The pastor is encouraged to publicly commission the parish co-leaders / Synodal team during Mass on the first Sunday of Advent, November 28, the official beginning of the Synodal Process, *For a Synodal Church...Communion, Participation, and Mission* in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.
- Prepare parish synodal team by registering them to attend an orientation/training workshop on the synodal process presented by the ASF Synodal Team\*. Attendance rosters will be sent to the pastor at the completion of the training.
- Communicate to current parishioners, those who are no longer practicing the Catholic faith, and ecumenical partners, the upcoming parish synodal consultation process.

- Implement, monitor, and guide the parish synodal consultation process. Every parish is asked to conduct at least two synodal consultation gatherings. Attendance rosters of those who participate are to be submitted with the parish synthesis.
- Intentional interviews with Catholics who no longer practice their faith can also be conducted by parishioners who volunteer to interview at least one other person.
- Prepare and submit parish synthesis and attendance forms to the archdiocesan office by April 15, 2022. You can submit by email to [dfrias@archdiosf.org](mailto:dfrias@archdiosf.org) or mail to Denise Frias, PMD Executive Assistant, 4000 St. Joseph Place NW, Albuquerque, NM 87120.

\*Materials will be distributed as soon as they are created, reviewed, and approved for publication by the ASF Synodal Committee. Please see proposed timeline on page five.



## ARCHDIOCESAN TIMELINE



October 9-10, 2021	Synod Opening in Rome (perhaps a time to gather Diocesan Synod team together)
<b>October 17-18, 2021</b>	Synod Opening in Archdiocese of Santa Fe
Oct – Nov 2021	Preparing the People of God through preaching, catechesis, and other prayer opportunities (adoration, rosary, prayer circles, petitions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The goal of preparing the People of God prior to the start of consultations is to invigorate a spirit of dialogue, collaboration, and synodality within the parish as a crucial part of the synod process.</li><li>- Distribution of liturgical resources from the Office of Worship*</li></ul>
November 28, 2021	Celebration of the official beginning of the Synodal process in parishes. Mass and Commissioning of Synodal Co-Leaders and/or Parish Synodal Team.
December 2021	Zoom trainings for parish facilitators. Distribution of synodal process and additional parish resources*
January 9, 2022	<b>Consultations with the People of God begin (<i>Baptism of the Lord</i>)</b> The synod process is focused upon listening to all the baptized. <b>No one</b> – no matter their religious affiliation – <b>should be excluded</b> from sharing their perspective and experiences in these consultations. It is highly recommended that <u>at least two</u> consultation sessions be conducted in each parish.
January 18-25, 2022	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: opportunity to consult with other Christians (ASF Ecumenical Commission and/or local parish efforts).
February 15, 2022	Reporting materials distributed to parish teams*
April 15, 2022	Parish reports are due to the Archdiocesan Synodal Team. (Synodal reports, rosters of those who have attended, interview sheets, etc.)
May 2022	Drafting and feedback of archdiocesan information for USCCB Report by Archdiocesan Synodal Team.
<b>June 30, 2022</b>	<b>USCCB Report given to Synod of Bishops</b>



## PREPARING YOUR PARISH

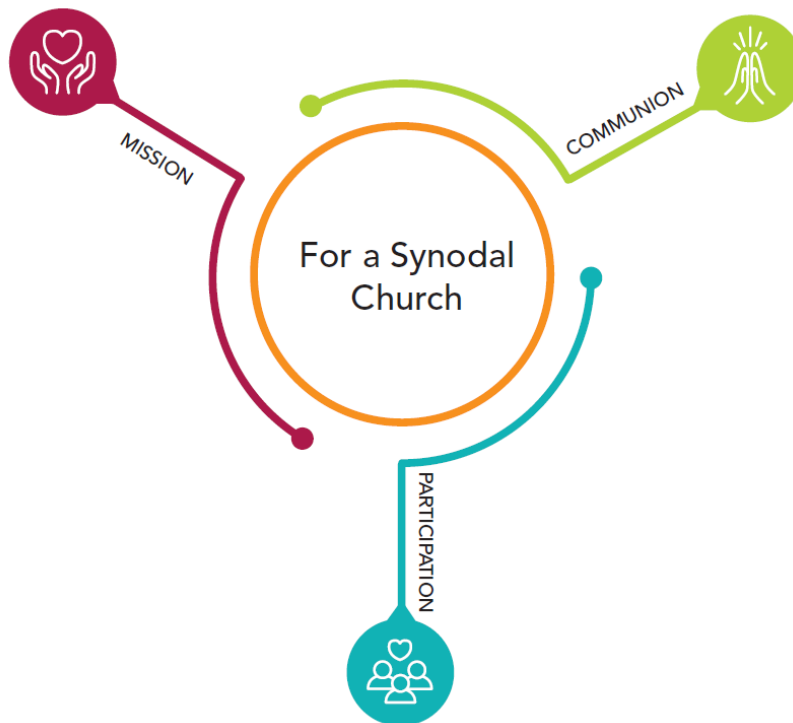
### Before Your Consultation

Listening to one another is enriched by knowing each other and sharing life together. It can be very helpful to share a common activity before starting to meet and dialogue with one another.

Some examples of activities that can be done together include a pilgrimage, social or charitable outreach, or simply sharing a meal with each other. Besides developing mutual trust among participants, this could also help foster the participation of people who are more attracted by practical action rather than intellectual discussion.

This approach follows Jesus' example of gathering His disciples to share a meal, walk together, or simply spend time with each other. It can be important to allow sufficient time and suitable space for participants to share food and beverage, prolonging the experience of listening to one another in a less formal and more spontaneous exchange during break times. This may open the door to a more fruitful participation of people who feel less comfortable in formal meetings, as well as give some opportunities to more freely clarify certain points.

Taking part in physical, cultural, social, and charitable activities can contribute to building communion among the participants, renewing the Church through new experiences of fraternity with one another.



## KEYWORDS FOR THE SYNODAL PROCESS

The theme of the Synod is “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.” The three dimensions of the theme are **communion**, **participation**, and **mission**. These three dimensions are profoundly interrelated. They are the vital pillars of a Synodal Church. There is no hierarchy between them. Rather, each one enriches and orients the other two. There is a dynamic relationship between the three that must be articulated with all three in mind.

### **Communion:**

By his gracious will, God gathers us together as diverse peoples of one faith, through the covenant that he offers to his people. The communion we share finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity. It is Christ who reconciles us to the Father and unites us with each other in the Holy Spirit. Together, we are inspired by listening to the Word of God, through the living Tradition of the Church, and grounded in the *sensus fidei* that we share. We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God’s call for his people.

### **Participation:**

A call for the involvement of all who belong to the People of God – laity, consecrated and ordained – to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another. This listening creates space for us to hear the Holy Spirit together, and guides our aspirations for the Church of the Third Millennium. Participation is based on the fact that all the faithful are qualified and are called to serve one another through the gifts they have each received from the Holy Spirit. In a synodal Church the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to *pray, listen, analyze, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions* which correspond as closely as possible to God’s will (ITC, Syn., 67-68). Genuine efforts must be made to ensure the inclusion of those at the margins or who feel excluded.

### **Mission:**

The Church exists to evangelize. We can never be centered on ourselves. Our mission is to witness to the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. This Synodal Process has a deeply missionary dimension to it. It is intended to enable the Church to better witness to the Gospel, especially with those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential peripheries of our world. In this way, synodality is a path by which the Church can more fruitfully fulfil her mission of evangelization in the world, as a leaven at the service of the coming of God’s kingdom.

### **Synod:**

Synod means “journeying together” and it involves listening to the Holy Spirit and to each other in order to discern the path we are called to walk together. The synod "is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission." Synod Handbook

## SAMPLE AGENDA AND SYNODAL PROCESS INFORMATION

- **Sample Agenda** to ensure each consultation incorporates prayer, reflection, and exchange (At the parish level the suggested time for most synodal consultations is 90-120 minutes)
  - Gathering time
  - Opening prayer or Mass
  - Welcoming and hospitality
  - Introduction to the theme: *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission* process (large group)
  - Break for informal sharing
  - Sharing around the main question and the 10 themes for consideration (small groups)
  - Reporting (small group)
  - Closing prayer and dismissal
- **Focus on the fundamental question**

Parish teams should consult section **5.3 The Main Question for Consultation** of the *Vademecum* (see page 9, 10 & 11 of this guidebook) for suggested questions that may be relevant to a particular parish or consultation group surrounding the Ten Themes:

  - Companions on the Journey
  - Listening
  - Speaking Out
  - Celebration
  - Sharing Responsibility for Our Common Mission
  - Dialogue in Church and Society
  - Ecumenism
  - Authority and Participation
  - Discerning and Deciding
  - Forming Ourselves in Synodality

Allow room for other questions that emerge within the process.

- **Tips for a successful parish consultation**
  - Open each consultation with the Prayer for the Synod: *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*
  - Each consultation should have one facilitator and one note-taker per small group
  - You are encouraged to prepare a short parish consultation guide with materials that are provided by the archdiocesan offices
  - Encourage young people to be involved in planning and facilitation of consultations, especially if you plan to conduct e-synodal meetings
  - Encourage parish groups to hold joint consultations within the timeframe of listening
  - Link liturgical celebrations with parish consultations
  - Be mindful that larger consultations can be broken up into smaller groups (groups of 7-10 are optimal for discussion)
  - Incorporate moments of silence and prayer through the consultation process
  - Encourage informal conversations during breaks in the process as a way of embodying the Spirit
  - Combine shared experiences, such as pilgrimages and social or charitable outreach, with consultations

## **MAIN QUESTION AND TEN THEMES**

### ***For a Synodal Church...Communion, Participation, and Mission***

The following section should be reviewed by parish leadership and parish synodal teams as they prepare for their synodal experience. It offers reflection on the main question for consultation as well as the 10 nuclei themes that can be used.

#### **Section 5.3 The Main Question for Consultation (from the *Vademecum*)**

This Synod poses the following fundamental question: ***A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.” How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?*** (PD, 26)

In responding to this question, we are invited to:

- *Recall our experiences*: What experiences of our local Church does this question call to mind?
- *Re-read these experiences in greater depth*: What joys did they bring? What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds did they reveal? What insights have they elicited?
- *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?

To help people explore this fundamental question more fully, the following themes highlight significant aspects of “lived synodality” (*Preparatory Document*, 30). In responding to these questions, it is helpful to remember that “journeying together” occurs in two deeply interconnected ways. First, we journey together with one another as the People of God. Next, we journey together as the People of God with the entire human family. These two perspectives enrich one another and are helpful for our common discernment towards deeper communion and more fruitful mission.

The questions accompanying each of the following ten themes can be used as a starting point or helpful guideline. Your conversation and dialogue do not need to be limited to the following questions:

#### **1. COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY**

*In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road.* In our local Church, who are those who “walk together”? Who are those who seem further apart? How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

#### **2. LISTENING**

*Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.* How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore? How are the laity listened to, especially

women and young people? What facilitates or inhibits our listening? How well do we listen to those on the peripheries? How is the contribution of consecrated men and women integrated? What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own? What space is there for the voice of minorities, especially people who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?

### **3. SPEAKING OUT**

*All are invited to speak with courage and **parrhesia**, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity.* What enables or hinders speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in our local Church and in society? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us? How does the relationship with the local media work (not only Catholic media)? Who speaks on behalf of the local church community, and how are they chosen?

### **4. CELEBRATION**

*“Walking together” is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.* How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our parish? How do they inspire the most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy? What space is given to participating in the ministries of lector and acolyte?

### **5. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION**

*Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate.* Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptized person called to participate in the mission of the Church? What hinders the baptized from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting? How does the parish support its members who serve society in various ways (social and political involvement, scientific research, education, promoting social justice, protecting human rights, caring for the environment, etc.)? How does the Church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way? How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?

### **6. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

*Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding.* To what extent do diverse peoples in our community come together for dialogue? What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church? How do we promote collaboration with local religious communities in the area, lay associations and movements, etc.? How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed? What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to? What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation? How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the spheres of politics, economics, culture, civil society, and people who live in poverty?

## **7. ECUMENISM**

*The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.* What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations in our area? What do we share and how do we journey together? What fruits have we drawn from walking together? What are the difficulties? How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

## **8. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION**

A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church. How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority or governance exercised within our local parish? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice? How are evaluations conducted and by whom? How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted? Have we had fruitful experiences of synodality on a local level? How do synodal bodies function at the level of the local Church (Pastoral Councils and other consultative bodies in parishes)? How can we foster a more synodal approach in our participation and leadership?

## **9. DISCERNING AND DECIDING**

*In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.* What methods and processes do we use in decision-making? How can they be improved? How do we promote participation in decision-making within church structures? Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God? What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice? What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability on all levels within our parish? How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?

## **10. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY**

Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning. How does our church community form people to be more capable of “walking together,” listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue? What formation is offered to parish leadership to foster discernment and the exercise of authority in a synodal way?

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Remember: each parish or ecclesial group should discern and focus on those aspects of synodality (communion, participation and mission) applicable in their ministry. Participants are encouraged to share with honesty and openness about their real-life experiences, and to reflect together on what the Holy Spirit might be revealing through what they share with one another. The Synod website [www.synod.va/en.html](http://www.synod.va/en.html) provides suggestions on how to pose these questions to various groups of people in simple and engaging ways.



