

Archdiocese of Regina

Synod 2021-2023



Parish and Group Consultation Handbook

Pope Francis has called the whole church to a process of consultation that will culminate in the Synod of Bishops in October 2023. The main way dioceses have been called to participate in the synodal process is by fostering opportunities for consultation and conversation in local parishes and other partner organizations, including religious communities, lay apostolates, educational organizations and outreach ministries.

These conversations can take many different forms. We offer one way a parish or group might organize a Synod Conversation event and discuss additional options for customizing things based on your particular context. This is not an exhaustive or mandated approach. Throughout the Synod documents, allowing room for the creativity of the Holy Spirit is encouraged.

This is not intended to be merely an intellectual or information-gathering exercise but a spirit-driven experience of contemplative listening and walking together. This can be seen in the materials provided by the Synod organizers in the document “Suggested tools for reflecting and sharing” as well as in the *Vademecum* or Handbook for the Synod.

As it outlines possible ways for engaging groups and individuals in the synodal process, it begins with a focus on the fundamental question for reflection;

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)

And then invites deeper, experiential reflection on the questions posed.

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?

For anyone familiar with Ignatian Spirituality, these reflections are not unlike an Ignatian Examen form of prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to help us recall significant past experiences, re-live those experiences in some fashion, and glean from this process spiritual fruits for the journey to come.

You will notice that the fundamental question invites two reflective perspectives;

- A reflection on how individuals and communities have experienced ‘walking together.’
- A reflection on how the Holy Spirit might be inviting us to grow in walking with others.

Suppose you were gathering with a small group of individuals. In that case, you could fairly easily adapt and use just this reflection, perhaps with an opening scripture piece like the Emmaus reading from Luke 26 and the Synod Prayer “*Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*” for an opening or closing prayer.

The materials provided also include a longer list of ten themes, each with its own list of reflective questions. These simply expand on the core, two-question reflection and are intended as additional aids in conversation and reflection. Groups, parishes, participants and individuals are not required to provide answers to all of these.

Outline for a Parish or Group Synod Consultation

Due to the spiritual and reflective nature of this synodal listening and accompanying process, it is recommended that whenever possible, you begin with a prayer that can serve as the starting point for reflection and further conversation.

The following outline is meant to provide your parish or group with a model for prayer and reflection that could be used as-is or adapted as your particular context requires.

Part 1: Prayer Service (approx. 30mins)

Opening Prayer

God our Father,
let the Spirit you sent on your Church
to begin the teaching of the Gospel,
continue to work in the world
through the hearts of all who believe.
We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son,
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
God forever, and ever. Amen.

Or

God of Love and Mercy,
let the splendour of your glory come upon us,
and through the radiance of the Holy Spirit
let the brightness of Christ,
who is light from light,
shine in the hearts of those born again by grace.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Or

God of light, from whom every good gift comes,
send your Spirit into our lives
with the power of a mighty wind,
and by the flame of your wisdom
open the horizons of our minds.
Loosen our tongues to sing your praise
in words beyond the power of speech,
for without your Spirit
we could never raise our voices in words of peace
or announce the truth that Jesus is the Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
God forever, and ever. Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading – Choose one of the following: Acts 10:1-48; Acts 2:1-11; Gal 5:1-24;
1 Cor 12:4-11; 1 Cor 12:12-26; 1 Cor 12:27-31

Psalm - Choose one of the following: Ps 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34; or Ps 33:10-15

Gospel - Choose one of the following: Lk 24:13-35; or Mt 5:13-16; or Jn 16:12-15; or
Lk 8:4-15; or Lk 8:16-18a, 19-21; or John 4:4–26

Homily – Time permitting, a brief homily that calls to mind the invitation to be present and accompany one another in our joys and our challenges would be appropriate.

Guided Examen on the Central Synodal Questions;

As we embark upon this listening path today, the Church asks us to reflect on our experiences of journeying together with our Church and with each other. You are invited to engage in a brief, guided Examen prayer, seeking the help of the Holy Spirit in identifying our own experiences of walking with the Church, the Church walking with us, those times when the walking together has been difficult, as well as those times and places where more effort and growth is needed on the way.

We ask the Holy Spirit, companion and guide to bring into our hearts all of those moments when we have been in particular need of accompaniment in the challenges and joys of our lives.

- Where has this walking together happened in a healthy, life-giving way? Where has this been more challenging for you or your church community? (Pause)

- We ask the Holy Spirit's help in identifying this same need for accompaniment in the lives of our families, friends, and neighbours. Where have you experienced the church accompanying those you know in healthy, life-giving ways? (Pause) Where have you experienced the church's need for growth in these or similar areas in the lives of others? (Pause)
- Where have you been aware of the gifts, inspirations, and willingness of the Church to walk closely with those on the margins; the wounded and hurting; survivors and victims; the poor, the sick, the elderly and the lonely? (Pause)
- Where have we been aware of shortfalls, challenges, and obstacles in the Church's ability or perhaps willingness to walk closely with those on the margins; the wounded and hurting; survivors and victims; the poor, the sick, the elderly and the lonely? (Pause)

Prayer

We thank you, Spirit, for revealing to us in your great generosity, those ways in which we have journeyed together with our Church in life's joys and trials, and those steps that you invite us to take to walk more closely with Jesus Christ and with each other, especial those who are most in need of your mercy. Amen.

Prayers of the Faithful

1. For God's holy Church: That it may be a light to the nations and the universal sacrament of salvation, walking with all peoples to the Kingdom of God.
2. For Francis our Pope, Donald, our Bishop, and the holy, faithful People of God in the Archdiocese of Regina: that the celebration of this Synod may help us to discern God's will and to carry it out boldly.
3. For all civil and public authorities: that they may always seek the common good, acting with justice and integrity.
4. For those who are sick, lonely, oppressed, or suffering: That we may see in them the face of Christ and be moved to work for charity and justice.
5. For ourselves, gathered here: That this Synodal Process may lead us ever deeper into the communion of the Church, foster our participation in it, and equip us to go out in mission.

Collect and Lord's Prayer (Our Father)

O God, our refuge and our strength, hear the prayers of your Church, for you are the source of all devotion, and grant, we pray, that what we ask in faith we may truly obtain. Through Christ our Lord. Our Father, ...

Adsumus Sancte Spiritus

Groups may wish to begin their discussion with the prayer, *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*, which has been used to open ecumenical councils and synods for many centuries. An alternate translation of this prayer is on the Archdiocesan website at <https://archregina.sk.ca/synod-2021-2023/>. Or, an alternate prayer may be used.

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.

Or

Almighty and ever-living God,
let the splendour of your glory come upon us,
and through the radiance of the Holy Spirit
let the brightness of Christ,
who is light from light,
shine in our hearts.
Teach us the way we must go
and show us the path to follow.
Allow justice to lead us down the right path,
and give us humility to listen to all people of good will.
Grant that the people once scattered
over the face of the earth
and divided by many tongues
may be gathered together by your heavenly Spirit.
Grant this through Christ our Lord.

Part 2. Break into Conversation groups

Small groups may be formed in whatever way is most convenient. Each group is asked to choose one individual who will record participant responses.

- These do not have to be verbatim transcripts but could take the form of brief summaries of key points.
- This may be recorded on loose-leaf or digitally as individual comfort and access to materials and technology allows.
- Alternately, you may choose to provide each group with newsprint and markers for recording key conversation points.
- Groups could reflect together on aspects of the Examen prayer used in the service provided above.
- Groups may instead reflect together on the fundamental questions of the Synod;

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”?

- Each group may be assigned one of the ten themes (see Appendix II), along with its subsequent reflective questions for discussion.
- Each group may be invited to choose from one or two of the ten themes provided, along with its subsequent reflective question for discussion.
- Alternately, you may allow groups to be determined by participants’ own interest in one of the ten themes provided.
- It is not essential that any or all of the ten themes be used, discussed or answered. Remember, these ten themes are merely an extension of the fundamental question on journeying together.

Allow for a significant amount of time in these discussions as the group size, gathering dynamics, and participants’ needs allow.

As this time in conversation and reflection draws to a close, invite groups to choose;

- One key fruit that was shared in their conversations.
- One individual who will share this key fruit with the larger group.
- A sample of the ten recommended themes can be found in the Appendix

Part 3: Large Group Sharing

A representative from each small group shares one key item from their group conversations with the larger gathering.

Part 4: Closing prayer

To end your event, you may choose to have all gathered share together the Synod Prayer, *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus* or some other appropriate prayer of thanksgiving for the work of the Holy Spirit among you on this day.

Part 5: Reporting to the Archdiocese of Regina

Ideally, the written summaries of each group or the notes collected on newsprint would be transcribed into a text document and emailed to the Archdiocese offices at *synod@archregina.sk.ca*

If this is not possible, photos of newsprint materials may be emailed, copies of loose-leaf notes may be scanned and emailed, or copies of all materials may be mailed by post to the Archdiocese of Regina.

Individual Submissions:

In addition to group responses, individual participants and those who may not be able to participate in a group gathering will have the opportunity to submit their personal responses to the Fundamental Question or any of the theme questions.

An individual response form is available on our Synod 2021-2023 resource page for individual online submissions.

Submissions will also be accepted by email at *synod@archregina.sk.ca* or by post.

Deadlines for Submissions (Parish, Group, Individuals); **May 9, 2022 (revised date)**

Final Notes:

We are providing tools that you may use as you like with the freedom to create a consultation process that best fits your particular context.

If possible, parishes and groups are encouraged to have two or three gatherings to provide ample time for participation and deepening conversation and reflection.

To reach as many diverse individuals and groups as possible, the Archdiocese will also provide resources for smaller groups and individuals.

We are also aware that many would not be comfortable coming to the parish to engage in these kinds of conversations, and many for whom a conversation steeped with religious overtones would be off-putting.

In your parishes and organizations, we would like you to encourage members to engage in conversations with the friends, family, and individuals they know who are no longer or never have been connected with the Church in any way.

We will be providing materials that could be adapted for one on one and home use for these situations.

All materials will be accessible through our Synod 2021-2023 webpage at <https://archregina.sk.ca/synod-2021-2023>.

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Gisele Bauche, *Samaritan Woman at the Well*

<https://spiritualityandart.ca>

Appendix: Ten Themes:

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 Christian 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 community? 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 baptised person called to participate in the mission of the Church? What hinders the baptised from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting? How does the community 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 neighbouring dioceses, 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? 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 Church? 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 in parishes and dioceses, Presbyteral Council, etc.)? 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 hierarchical 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? 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 foster discernment and the exercise of authority in a synodal way?