



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Guide for Facilitators and Notetakers



Synodal Gathering Facilitators

What is my role?

Facilitate one or more Synodal Gatherings to provide the feedback requested by Pope Francis' Synodal process and participate in the journeying together as a Church.

What do I have to do?

- Invite people to gather anytime between mid-November 2021– March 2022 to discuss the Synod questions and themes.
- Compile and provide the responses gathered at the synodal gatherings.
 - o Assign one or two note-takers to assist in gathering and compiling the feedback responses.
 - o A Notetaker Template is available at www.dor.org/synod.

How should I do it?

- Read and become familiar with the materials provided in the DOR Synod webpage beforehand for preparation to run the synodal gathering(s).
- Decide on the group(s) you will meet with and notify Elizabeth Johnston (585-328-3228 x1278 or elizabeth.johnston@dor.org), *Synod Project Coordinator*, about the gathering(s). Gather for discussions between mid-November 2021 – March 2022.
- There are two fundamental questions and ten themes. Your group **does not** have to respond to all ten. You may choose one theme, some that connect best with your group(s) or respond to all ten. The questions under each theme serve as prompts to help broaden the discussion.
- Make sure the notetakers can take clear notes that will help with the DOR reporting. Please be sure to include the demographic information for the group following the questions listed on the Notetaker Template.
- You may share the themes with your group(s) before they gather so they have time to read.
- Lead the opening and closing prayer. See prayers provided via the DOR Synod webpage.
- Share some ground rules for participation and the expectations for an effective dialogue. Remind participants to respect one another's opinions and do not challenge other's ideas.
- Guide the conversation, ensuring that everyone is welcomed, has an opportunity to participate, their input is valued, and everyone understands that the Holy Spirit is leading the discussion.
- Stay centered on the discussion and keep the group on task but be sensitive to the emotional and spiritual needs of the group.
- Consider assigning a timekeeper to keep the gatherings to the agreed time for the group.
- Working with the notetaker, summarize the conversation(s) and submit using the Synodal Input Form at www.dor.org/synod by March 31, 2022.

Practical Suggestions for Successful Facilitation

1. It helps to set ground rules and expectations at the start of the consultation. Some examples could include:
 - a. We will treat each other and what anyone says with reverence and respect.
 - b. One person speaks at a time.
 - c. We will listen with an open mind and ask clarifying questions.
 - d. We will be stopping the conversation at certain intervals to reflect and pray.
 - e. Our primary mode is dialogue: When we speak our purpose is to advance the conversation. Please avoid arguing or comments that seek to advance a personal agenda.
 - f. We limit how long we speak so that everyone has time to share.
 - g. We only speak once until everyone has had an opportunity to share.
 - h. This is a forward-looking conversation, so lean toward solutions.
2. If you need to interrupt a speaker, it helps to acknowledge their contribution by providing a brief synthesis of what you heard them say and thank them for their contribution.
3. If someone offers a comment in the form of a complaint, ask the person to reframe her/his comment in the form of a hope or aspiration.
4. During the conversations, it is possible some difficult topics may arise. It is important to acknowledge the pain or difficulty expressed and thank the speaker for their willingness to share. While it will not be possible to go deeply into all aspects of the personal struggles during the gathering, it is important to know that there are resources available to people that can be shared:

For questions on how the Diocese of Rochester works to Protect Our Children:
<https://www.dor.org/protecting-our-children/office-of-safe-environment/>


For questions on how to connect victims of sexual abuse to assistance:
<https://www.dor.org/protecting-our-children/office-of-victim-assistance/>

For questions regarding the Diocese of Rochester Reorganization:
<https://www.dor.org/reorganization/>

For questions regarding possible Financial Fraud:
<https://www.dor.org/about/office-ministry-directory/financial-fraud-hotline/>

For questions regarding Pastoral Resources and Planning: <https://opr.dor.org/>

For questions regarding Evangelization and Catechesis and responses to doctrinal matters:
<https://oec.dor.org/>



Components of a Synodal Gathering

Synodal Gatherings can occur in many ways: a one-time session, multiple sessions over a series of days, as a part of an existing meeting such as a pastoral council meeting, as a daylong retreat, online, etc. The gatherings are not meant to replace existing consultative bodies, though those may incorporate the synodal process into their meetings. For assistance with a format that works for your group please contact Elizabeth Johnston, Project Coordinator, at Elizabeth.johnston@dor.org.

Any of the formats should include the following components:

1. Welcome: If participants do not know each other, ask them to briefly introduce themselves to the group.
2. Open with Prayer: *Adsumus, Sancte Spiritus*, the Prayer of Invocation to the Holy Spirit for an Ecclesial Assembly of Governance or Discernment, is available on the www.dor.org/synod webpage. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament preceding the meeting may also be helpful depending on the group.
3. Share Bishop Matano's video: this is also found on the www.dor.org/synod page and allows all participants an opportunity to hear our Bishop's hopes for the Synod. Slides from the DOR Synodal PowerPoint can also be shared to define key terms.
4. Establish the ground rules: examples are provided above.
5. Review of section 2.4 of the Vademecum, "Avoiding Pitfalls." This can be done together with the group, by the facilitator at the beginning of the session, or by sending out the section prior to meeting.
6. Reflection on the Theme(s) to be discussed: For a shorter session, it can be decided prior to the gathering which theme(s) speak to the group. Open the discussion to the group and be sure the notetaker has time to summarize. Notes do not need to be verbatim and should not identify individual people by name. Individual privacy should be honored and digital recordings discouraged.
7. Once the gathering is completed, offer a closing prayer which allows participants to offer their intentions.

Synod Gathering Notetaker Template



GOAL

*“The **purpose of the Synod**, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but “to plant dreams, **draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to be nourished, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands.**” (PD, 32)*

INSTRUCTIONS

- This template is to assist, if desired, for note taking at the Synod gatherings with your respective group/s.
- It follows a similar format of the online input form to help you prepare to submit the responses.
- Remember, this is not meant to be a technical process of “checking off” all the questions, the group does not need to complete each of the theme question pages. Only submit responses to the themes discussed by your Synod Gathering group/s.
- After completing the gathering, work together with the Group Facilitator to summarize and input the responses through the online input form.

SYNODAL PARTICIPANTS AND GATHERING EXPERIENCE

1. **Briefly describe the participants at your gathering:** *Please include approximate age ranges, percentage male/female, faith affiliation (practicing Catholic, non-practicing Catholic or non-Catholic/other faiths), Mass attendance, if applicable (weekly, monthly, yearly, never), county/ies where participants reside, and relevant information that you wish to share. Please do not include names.*

2. **Briefly describe the experience of gathering together:** *How did your group gather? What were the overall impressions of gathering together? What was successful? What needed improvement?*

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journey’s together”: How is this “journeying together” happening in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

DISCUSSION THEME QUESTION

I. JOURNEYING COMPANIONS

In the Church and in society, we are side by side on the same road. The Preparatory Document offers the reflection that Jesus is the protagonist of the Church and its people, who proclaims to the crowd; with those called to be apostles and their successors serving in unity and fidelity. The Synodal process ultimately should reveal more fully who Christ is and how he informs the Church (PD, 18-19).

In your local Church, who are the ones “journeying together”? When we say: “our Church,” who is part of it? Who is asking us to journey together? Who are the road companions, including those outside the ecclesial perimeter? What persons or groups are left on the margins, expressly or in fact?

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DISCUSSION THEME QUESTION

II. LISTENING

Listening is the first step, but it requires having an open mind and heart, without prejudices.

To whom does our particular Church “need to listen to”? How are the Laity, especially young people and women, listened to? How do we integrate the contribution of Consecrated Men and Women? What space is there for the voice of minorities, the discarded, and the excluded? Do we identify prejudices and stereotypes that hinder our listening? How do we listen to the social and cultural context in which we live?

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DISCUSSION THEME QUESTION

III. SPEAKING OUT

All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia (candid), that is, integrating freedom, truth, and charity.

How do we promote a free and authentic style of communication within the community and its organizations, without duplicity and opportunism? And in relation to the society of which we are a part? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us? How does the relationship with the media system (not only Catholic media) work? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen? When and how do we profess our faith in the world? How do we individually witness to our faith?

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DISCUSSION THEME QUESTION

IV. CELEBRATING

“Journeying together” is only possible if it is based in prayer, and on a communal listening to the Word of God and the celebration of the Eucharist.

How do prayer and liturgical celebration inspire and direct our “journeying together”? How do they inspire the most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of all the Faithful in the liturgy and the exercise of the sanctifying function? What space is given to the exercise of the ministries of the reader and acolyte? Are celebrations of Mass reverent, uplifting, sacred moments?

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V. CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN THE MISSION

Synodality is at the service of the Church’s mission, in which all her members are called to participate.

Since we are all missionary disciples, how is each Baptized person called to be a leader in the mission? How does the community support its members committed to service in society (social and political commitment, in scientific research and teaching, in the promotion of social justice, in the protection of human rights, especially the right to life from the moment of conception until natural death, and in caring for the common home, etc.)? How do you help them to live out these commitments in a logic of mission? How is discernment about mission-related choices made, and who participates in it?

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DISCUSSION THEME QUESTION

VI. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Dialogue is a path of perseverance that also includes silences and sufferings, but which is capable of gathering the experience of persons and peoples.

What are the places and modes of dialogue within our particular Church? How are divergences of vision, the conflicts, the difficulties addressed? How do we promote collaboration with neighboring Dioceses, with and among religious communities in the area, with and among lay associations and movements, etc.? What experiences of dialogue and shared commitment do we have with believers of other religions and with non-believers? How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the world of politics, economics, culture, civil society, the poor...? How does the Church respond to social and political trends that are challenging and are in conflict with the faith of Jesus Christ?

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DISCUSSION THEME QUESTION

VII. WITH OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

The dialogue between Christians of different denominations, united by one Baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.

What relations do we have with the brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations? What areas do they concern? What fruits have we drawn from this “journeying together”? What are the difficulties?

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DISCUSSION THEME QUESTION

VIII. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

A synodal Church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.

How do we identify the goals to be pursued, the way to achieve them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority exercised within our particular Church? What are the practices of teamwork and co-responsibility? How are lay ministries and the assumption of responsibility by the Faithful promoted? How do synodal bodies function at the level of the particular Church? Are they a fruitful experience? What understanding is there of the mission of the bishops, the successors to the Holy Apostles?

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IX. DISCERNING AND DECIDING

In a synodal style, decisions are made through discernment, based on a consensus that flows from the common obedience to the Spirit.

By what procedures and methods do we discern together and make decisions? How can they be improved? How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchically structured communities? How do we articulate the consultative phase with the deliberative one, the process of decision-making with the moment of decision-taking? How and with what tools do we promote transparency and accountability?

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DISCUSSION THEME QUESTION

X. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

The spirituality of journeying together is called to become an educational principle for the formation of the human person and of the Christian, of the families, and of the communities.

How do we form people, especially those who hold roles of responsibility within the Christian community, to make them more capable of “journeying together,” listening to one another and engaging in dialogue? What formation do we offer for discernment and the exercise of authority? What tools help us to read the dynamics of the culture in which we are immersed and their impact upon the mission of the Church, called in existence by Christ?