



Synod Questions and Themes

*“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)*

Pope Francis has invited us to reflect on the following questions together:

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

To help groups in their discussion, ten themes (nuclei) are offered in the Preparatory Document. Groups **do not** need to answer all of these themes and questions. They are more like prompts to help broaden discussion. The nuclei questions help groups to consider both the joys and challenges of where we are as a synodal Church, and where we are called to journey together. Groups can choose one or two themes or reflect on all ten themes. Groups that choose to reflect on more than one or two themes may want to meet multiple times.

Any group that would like to submit their summaries should do so online using the **Synodal Input Form** at www.dor.org/synod. Only enter summaries for the themes discussed by the group, all others may be skipped. Individuals may also use the Synodal Input Form.

The Ten Nuclei (Themes):

- I. **THE 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 Church? What persons or groups are left on the margins, expressly or in fact?



- 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?



III. **SPEAKING OUT:** All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia (candidly), 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?



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?



V. **CO-RESPONSIBLE 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?



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?



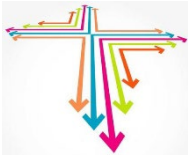
VII. **WITH THE OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS:** The dialogue between Christians of different denominations, united by one Baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey. What relations do we have with the brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations? What areas do they concern? What fruits have we drawn from this “journeying together”? What are the difficulties?



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?



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?



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?

