

Helpful Terms

communion – an intimate union between persons. God is a communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; God reveals himself to draw people into communion with him and with each other. The reception of Holy Communion (Eucharist) is a concrete expression and strengthening of communion with Christ and his Church.

consultation – a process in which the pastors of the Church seek the counsel of the People of God, clergy and laity alike. A synod listening session is an example of a consultative process in the Church.

discernment – the art of interpreting the promptings of the Holy Spirit guiding a person or a community to align their will with God’s will. Discernment is a process of listening for the Holy Spirit in the Word of God, in prayer, and in the voices of spiritual companions.

ecumenism – the promotion of unity among Christians through dialogue and friendship, as well as common prayer and mission

mission – a sending for a purpose. In love, the Father sent the Son to save the world by his life, death, and resurrection, and Jesus sends his disciples to carry on his mission. The Church’s mission is to evangelize, to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the aim of raising up missionary disciples who extend the kingdom of God.

participation – a contribution to the Church’s life. Participation is an expression of co-responsibility: every baptized person is called to participate in the life of the Church and sent to participate in her mission in the world. A parish pastoral council is an example of a participatory body in the Church.



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Synod 21-23
For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

Archdiocese of Los Angeles
Listening Sessions



Participant Guide

Prayer for the Synod

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.

In October 2021, His Holiness Pope Francis opened a worldwide synod process. A *synod* is an assembly, principally of bishops, that gathers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discuss and decide on matters in the Church's life and mission. This synod is unique because the Holy Father has summoned the whole Church to participate in a three-year process prior to an assembly of bishops in Rome in 2023.

The Greek word *synodos* is a fusion of two words which translates as "on the road together." *Synodality* is a way of being Church, in which the whole People of God journey together each according to their roles and spiritual gifts. With a spirit of synodality, we can deepen our communion with God and each other, model participation in the life of the Church, and go forth together on our mission to proclaim the Gospel to the world.



In the face of global crises, the synod offers the Church a moment of grace by which to pray and reflect on a synodal way forward in her life and mission. Participation in the synod can be a source of renewal in our parishes and communities as we aim to raise up a new generation of missionary disciples of Jesus Christ for our time.

Shared Norms for Dialogue

As we engage in this listening session, we will:

- speak clearly, one person at a time, without interruption,
- listen for understanding, with an open mind and without judgment,
- display attentive posture, conscious of body language and facial expressions,
- be sensitive to differences in communication styles,
- limit how long we speak so everyone has time to share,
- and speak only once until everyone else has had a chance to share.

Discussion A: "Our Journey Together Now"

- How have we "journeyed together" as a Church in recent years?
- Please give concrete examples of fruitful experiences, as well as examples of what has hindered our journeying together.
- We invite you to share positive experiences and bring to light challenging and negative experiences.

"Journeying together" can mean:

- Listening to others on the journey and speaking on what matters to us about our parish/community and the Catholic Church,
- Celebrating beautiful and meaningful liturgy (Mass and the sacraments),
- Going on mission, empowered and equipped to proclaim the Gospel,
- Dialoguing with diverse members of our community and Christians of other traditions,
- Discerning and deciding, through participation in consultative processes,
- Growing in synodality through formation in walking together.

"Church" can mean the Archdiocese of Los Angeles or our parish (or community, apostolate, or group).

Discussion B: "Journeying Together in the Future"

- How might the Holy Spirit be inviting our Church to "journey together" more fully in the coming years?
- What are your hopes for the Church to live in deeper unity, to promote participation, and to proclaim the Gospel?
- Please give concrete examples.
- As you think of possibilities, perhaps pay attention to the ideas that give you clarity, enthusiasm, peace, and hope (these may be an indication of the promptings of the Spirit).