



A Synod on Synodality – Communion, Participation and Mission

“By walking together, and together reflecting on the journey made, the Church will be able to learn from what it will experience which processes can help it live communion, to achieve participation, to open itself to mission.” – Pope Francis



Pope Francis, on the 24 April 2021, approved a new synodal program for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. Initially the Synod, *“For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission,”* was hoped to commence in the month of October 2022. However, it was delayed and now will begin in each local diocese on October 17, 2021. Pope Francis will formally open the universal synod in Rome on October 10th.

This path toward the celebration of the Synod consists of three phases, between October 2021 and October 2023, a diocesan phase and a continental phase that will give life to two different working documents and finally a conclusive phase at the level of the Universal Church. These three phases will lead up to a formal teaching document that will be provided to the universal Church in 2023.

During our local phase, we will ask for input in the areas presented in the preparatory document from all the People of God via a variety of methods. It is hoped that as many people as possible take part in this historical event and that it truly will bear fruit for the Diocese of St. Augustine as we listen to one another. One method that will be used is gathering in small groups across the diocese in prayerful discernment. These dates, all Thursdays, and times will be:

November 11, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. – St. Anastasia, St. Augustine

December 9, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. – St. Matthew, Jacksonville

January 13, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. – Sacred Heart, Fleming Island

January 20, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. – St. Madeleine Sophie, High Springs

February 3, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. – Queen of Peace, Gainesville (the parish has a 6:00 p.m. Mass)

February 24, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. – Assumption, Jacksonville



Adsumus, Sancte

Spiritus Prayer of invocation to the Holy Spirit for an ecclesial assembly of governance or discernment (thus synodal)

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer Adsumus Sancte Spiritus, the first word of the Latin original meaning, “We stand before You, Holy Spirit,” which has been historically used at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, being attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 - 4 April 636). As we are called to embrace this synodal path of the Synod 2021-2023, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to operate within us so that we may be a community and a people of grace. For the Synod 2021-2023, we propose to use this simplified version, so that any group or liturgical assembly can pray more easily.

*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

Focus Questions

The People of God are asked to prayerfully consider the following questions before attending one of the discernment sessions:

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?

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 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?

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? The Synod website provides suggestions on how to go about narrowing these down.