

Guide for Small Group Leaders

PREPARATION:

Make sure you are familiar with the process of the Synodal journey and the format for the Gatherings. Resources are available to help you with this: www.dublindiocese.ie/synod

Hopefully, as part of the invitation to the Gatherings, people will have been made aware of the nature and purpose of the Gathering and had a chance to look at the questions beforehand. Though don't assume this has happened! The Introductory part of the Gathering will help people with this too.

The Animators are also available during the small group time to help if you feel you are getting into difficulty or need extra support.

BEFORE THE SHARING BEGINS:

Try to create a sense of welcome in the small group

Remind them of the "ground rules":

- **Listening to understand**—not about responding to what is said, or seeking clarification, or defending a position or making judgements
- **Appropriate sharing** – reminder that this is a public meeting and it is more appropriate to disclose a safeguarding issue to the proper authorities if this should arise.
- **Confidentiality** - any sharing after the meeting must not be attributed to a particular person.

DURING THE SHARING:

Keep an eye on time - make sure everyone has the chance to speak

Don't interrupt a person with questions/clarification etc. - let them speak

Thank the person (by name) and perhaps pause for a moment to honour the sharing before inviting the next person to share.

If a person is talking too much...

Gently interrupt them and remind them that time is limited for the sharing. Thank them for their contribution and invite the next person to share.

"I'm sorry to interrupt you (Name) but due to time constraints I'm afraid we are going to have to move on to the next person. Thank you for what you have shared."

If a person hasn't spoken...

Gently invite them to share if they would like to. Remember this in an invitation so people do not have to share if they choose not to.

"(Name), would you like to share your response to the question?"

If a person starts wandering off the topic of the question...

Remind them of the question we have been asked to share on (it should be displayed on the screen) and try to keep them on track

"Thanks for what you've shared so far, could I just remind you that we are all being asked to share on our experience of (restate the question from the screen)"

If a person starts sharing something inappropriate or begins making a disclosure...

You may need to interrupt them and remind them that this is not an appropriate space to make a disclosure and that they can speak to you (or an Animator or member of the Parish Team) who will be able to point them in the direction of further help and support.

"I'm sorry to interrupt but I just wanted to remind you that this may not be the best place to share this. I'd be happy to talk with you at the break/end of the evening. Thank you."

If a person gets upset/angry...

Don't be frightened of emotion - sharing on our experience can be an emotional thing. Give them some time, encourage them that what they are feeling is OK, perhaps suggest we come back to them when they've had a chance to compose themselves.

*"Take your time"
"Would you like to take a moment and we can come back to you?"*



Writing Responses

During the writing of responses on Post It Notes please be aware of any member of the group who may be struggling to write, for whatever reason.

You may wish to offer to write for them as they dictate their response to you.