Archdiocese of Dublin

SIMPLY SYNOD

RESOURCE FOR THE SYNODAL PATHWAY DIOCESAN PHASE

ARCHDIOCESE OF DUBLIN

ABOUT THE LOGO

The Logo for the Dublin Archdiocese Synodal Path is inspired by the phrase

'we are all in the same boat.'[1]

- The lighthouse represents the guiding light of the Holy Spirit who guides us on our way
- The boat represents the Church, the People of God journeying together
- The water represents the waters of baptism and the equality of all the baptised

[1] Occurs in Fratelli Tutti no.32, The Preparatory Document for the Synod no.5 and the Vedemecum 2.3

ABOUT THE RESOURCE

This resource is for anyone who wants to discover the meaning of being a synodal Church.

Informed by the Preparatory Document for a Synodal Church, it is for use in the Diocesan Phase of the Synodal Pathway.

It outlines the meaning of synod and its implications for how we are as Church.

It encourages us to develop the right disposition and attitudes to embark on the journey.

It also provides some suggestions about the kind of listening we will need to practice together.

It is complimented by short video clips available on the Dublin Archdiocese website.

These videos speak to the themes of:

- Change and calling upon the Holy Spirit
- Synodality and Synodal Process
- Attitudes and Dispositions we bring to the Process
- Listening, Dialogue and Discernment
- The Ten Informing Themes for Synodality

PRAYER FOR THE SYNOD:
Adsumus Sancte Spiritus

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer Adsumus Sancte Spiritus, the first word of the original Latin, meaning, "We stand before You, Holy Spirit," which has been historically used at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, and is attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 – 4 April 636). As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace. For the Synodal pathway from 2021 to 2023, we will use this prayer.

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.

·What words or phrases in this prayer stand out for you or speak to you?

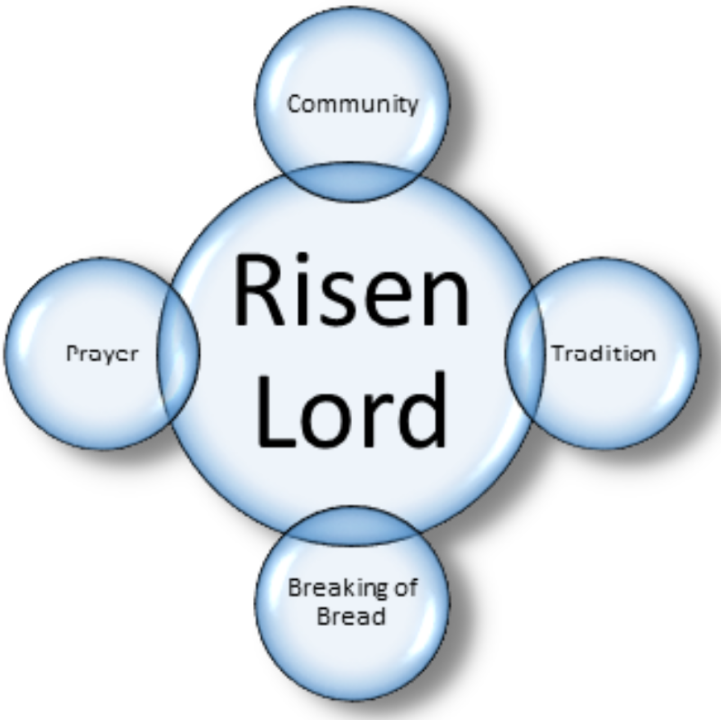
SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR A SYNODAL PATHWAY

In his homily of the 3rd June 2021, the Archbishop reminded us of the context we find ourselves in as we are invited to embark upon a synodal pathway. This context is one of an ever-changing Church in an ever-changing world.

Archbishop Dermot describes five discernible historical phases of change

WHAT REMAINS CONSTANT IN THE MIDST OF ALL THE CHANGE?

Archbishop Dermot identifies four essential elements where we encounter the Risen Lord: the community without which there is no Church, the living Tradition, the Breaking of Bread and Prayer.



These striking words set the context for our Synodal Pathway:

'The people of God are a people on the move, a people on pilgrimage through life and history. This is how the Church actually is: never static, but continually responding to a changing cultural context.'

'It is in this context that a change of emphasis in the Church is discernible in recent initiatives. For example, there is a deep and serious consultation to discern the promptings of God in our heritage and in the People of God.The Task Force, which I established under the title, "Building Hope", is a step in that direction, as is the National Synod which was announced in March. What is now emerging is a different sense of "ownership" of the Church and its mission—from a "clergy-owned" to a Church truly "owned" by the People of God."' [2]

[2] Homily of Archbishop Dermot Farrell for the Feast of Saint Kevin, Mass for the Metropolitan Chapter of Dublin, 3rd June 2021: St Mary's Pro-Cathedral.

REFLECT:

As we begin this journey together take time to think back on the changes you have seen in your lifetime and jot them down:

- **In the world**

- **In your family and your life**

- **In the Church**

- **What helped you to cope with these changes?**

- **What's the difference for you between a clergy-owned Church and a Church owned by the People of God?**

CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO ONE ON THE PRAYER OF THE SYNOD

WHAT IS SYNODALITY?

The idea of synodality comes from word 'synod.' It's an old word from the Greek speaking world – **syn** means with, and **odos** means a path.

It's a path or a journey that the People of God take together with each other. In this synodal pathway all the People of God take their part and make their own contribution. When we walk together as the People of God it's called **synodality.**

'First and foremost, synodality denotes the particular style that qualifies the life and mission of the Church, expressing her nature as the People of God journeying together and gathering in assembly, summoned by the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel. Synodality ought to be expressed in the Church's ordinary way of living and working'.[3]

'In this synodal pathway we are all invited to reflect on two key questions

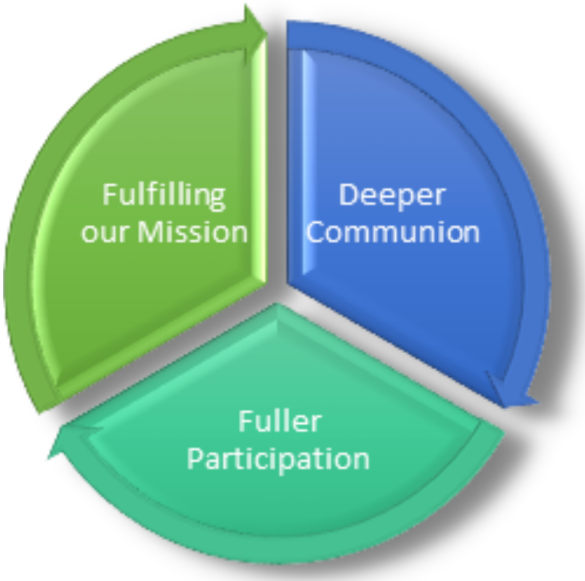
- How is this 'journeying together' happening in our particular situation?
- What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?

The purpose of journeying together is not about producing more documents but more about:

Planting dreams
having a vision
allowing hope to flourish
inspiring trust
binding wounds
weaving together relationships
awakening a new dawn
learning from one another
creating a bright resourcefulness
that will
enlighten our minds, warm our hearts and give strength to our hands[4]

[3] International Theological Commission (ITC), Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church (Vatican City, March 2018), Introduction.
[4] Adapted from Pope Francis' address at the Opening of the Synod of Bishops on Young People 03/08/18

BREAKING OPEN THE KEY WORDS FOR THE SYNODAL PROCESS



'Communion, participation and mission are technical terms, often used in Church language. The following helps us to understand what this is.

Communion - Sharing God's life with God and each other.

God shares his life with us so that we can experience this and share it with others. At baptism we share in the life of the Father, Son and Spirit. Sharing what gives us life is then an essential part of our call as Christians. Just as God shares his life respecting our freedom, so we too are called to share in an environment that respects freedom, aware that God is with us.

Participation – Taking our part.

Through our baptism we are called to take our part in building each other up. In a synodal Church the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will. [5] In encouraging participation, our efforts to include others must be genuine as we invite those who feel they are on the margins to also take their part.

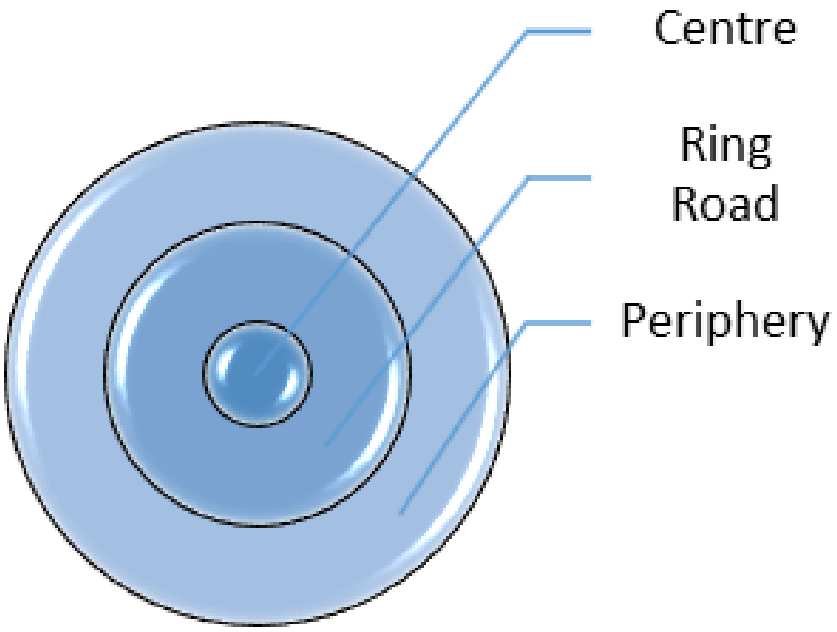
Mission – We are sent out to tell others about the Good News.

All of the baptized are invited to go out to others because the Church exists to proclaim the Good News. For this reason, Pope Francis reminds us that the Church cannot be centred inwards on itself.The dynamic of a synodal path enables the Church to better witness to the Good News. Pope Francis is inviting us particularly to reach out to those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical peripheries of our world.

[5] ICT, 67-68.

WHAT'S A PERIPHERY ?

This is a word Pope Francis has used often. A periphery is a place on the outer edge of something. If you imagine a road system of most cities, there is the centre and then there is the outer edge of the city. This is where the periphery is, beyond the centre.



If we apply the image of periphery to Church often there is a central group of people who are involved in their parish and there are others who are on the edge or periphery of parish life. When we are on a synodal pathway, we connect not just with the centre but with those who feel they are excluded and often left out and those who are asking questions about the meaning of life.

REFLECT:

- How can we share what gives us life?
- Why might it be important to encourage others to take their part?
- Who might we need to reach out to and include?

PARTICIPATING IN THE SYNODAL PROCESS

In the synodal pathway we are first invited to be aware of attitudes we can cultivate in order to take our part Paying attention to the 'mind sets' we might bring to the process.

- We can ask ourselves if we are open to sharing, in particular are we open to sharing our feelings as well as our thoughts? Being synodal requires time for sharing

- Humility in listening must correspond to courage in speaking. Our listening helps us to get in touch with others experience. Pope Francis has encouraged everyone to speak their truth, but to do this is in a considered and kind way that makes it easy to hear.

- We are invited to dialogue. Dialogue is different from discussion where there can be argument and animosity. When we dialogue, we leave behind prejudices and labelling. Dialogue means we are open to the truth of the other in an atmosphere of acceptance, where it can lead to new insight if we are open to each other.

- Pope Francis has compared clericalism to a virus that infects us all. It is a mindset that separates laity and clergy into two camps. Overcoming the influence of clericalism is a key challenge. Clericalism can hold us back from working together as the People of God and taking full responsibility for the life of the Church.

- We come together to listen to each other and to dialogue so that we will all change. Openness to conversion and change is an essential attitude to bring to the synodal process.

- Synods are an experience of Church in discernment. Together we listen to each other and to the movement of God's Spirit in us and among us. This helps us to see God's future.

- When we come together to listen to each other, we no longer rely on our own opinions and thoughts but rely on each other.

- Synods are a time to dream and "spend time with the future", imagining this with God and each other.

CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO TWO ON SYNODALITY AND SYNODAL PROCESS

SEVEN DISPOSITIONS THAT HELP US TO FULLY PARTICIPATE

Here are seven mindsets that we can cultivate to help us all be synodal:

1 **An innovative outlook:** We need to be open to develop new approaches. This calls for creativity and courage to step out of the way we usually do things.

2 **Being inclusive:** If we want everyone to take their part then we need to appreciate variety and include all those we often forget or ignore.

3 **An open mind:** We can often label others and limit their contribution. We come to a synodal way of working when we are open to new ideas and methods.

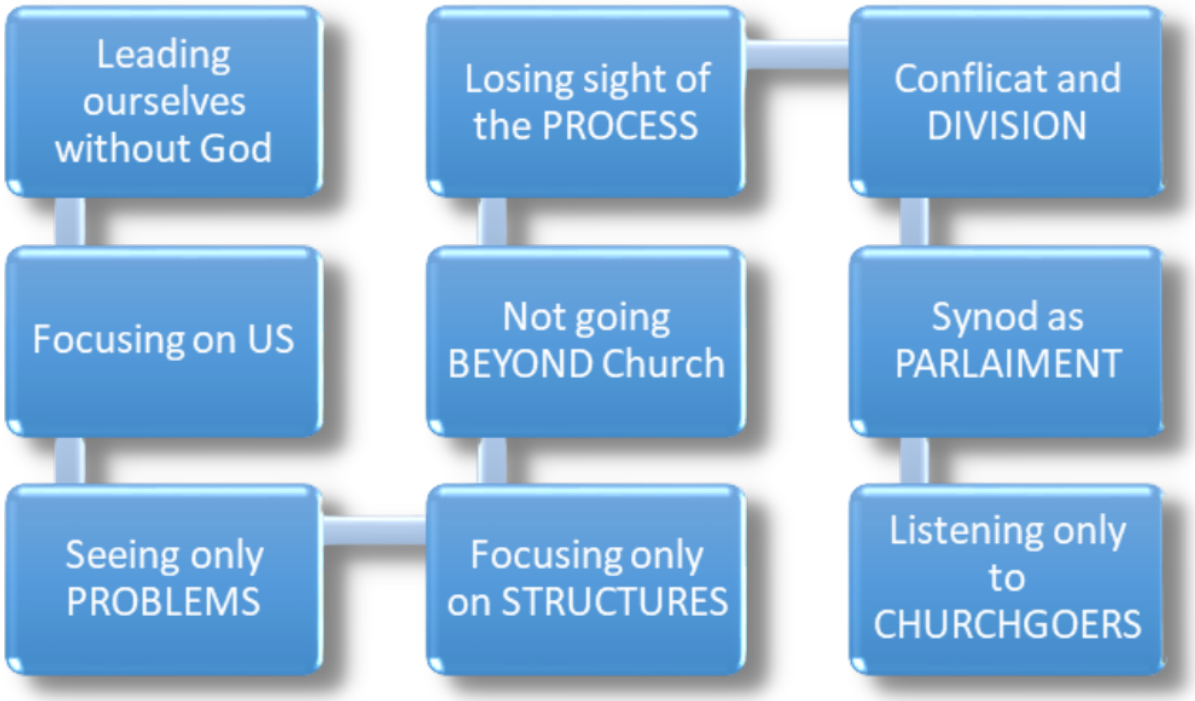
4 **Listening to each and every one:** When we learn from one another, we better reflect the wonderful multi-faceted reality that Christ's Church is meant to be.

5 **An understanding of "journeying together":** This requires patience as we enable each other to be on a path where we discover God's will together.

6 **Understanding the concept of a co-responsible Church:** When we value and involve the unique role and vocation of each member for the renewal and building up of the whole Church then we are being co-responsible.

7 **Reaching out through ecumenical and interreligious dialogue:** We can dream with other Christians, those of other faiths and the entire human family.

NINE PITFALLS TO LOOK OUT FOR AND AVOID



Being aware of these pitfalls can help us to engage positively in the synodal pathway.

1) **Be aware of wanting to lead ourselves instead of being led by God.** Synodality is a spiritual process that is led by the Holy Spirit. It is not a business planning training event. We can be tempted to forget that we are pilgrims and servants on the path marked out for us by God.

2) **Be aware of focusing on ourselves and our immediate concerns.** The Synodal Process is an opportunity to open up, to look around us, to see things from other points of view, and to move out in missionary outreach to the peripheries. This requires us to think long-term and global as well as local.

3) **Be aware of only seeing "problems."** We need to appreciate where the Holy Spirit is generating life and see how we can let God work more fully. The challenges, difficulties, and hardships facing our world and our Church are many. Nevertheless, fixating on the problems will only lead us to be overwhelmed, discouraged, and cynical.

4) **Be aware of focusing only on structures.** The conversion and renewal of structures will come about only through us changing too. We can focus on the experience of journeying together to discerning the path forward, inspired by the Holy Spirit, only then on how structures might change.

5) Be aware of not looking beyond the visible confines of the Church. The Church exists for the world. We must keep the bigger picture in view to fulfil our mission in the world. A synodal process is a time to dialogue with people with a range of experience and expertise, with all people of good will. It is a time to reflect on ecology and peace, life issues and migration. It is an opportunity to deepen the ecumenical journey with other Christian denominations and to deepen our understanding with other faith traditions.

6) Be aware of losing sight of the objectives of the Synodal Process. A synodal process keeps in mind the goal of discerning how God calls us to walk forward together. No single synodal process is going to resolve all our concerns and problems. Synodality is an attitude and an approach of moving forward in a co-responsible way that is open to welcoming God's fruits together over time.

7) Be aware of conflict and division. Jesus prayed that they may all be one. The Holy Spirit always leads us deeper into communion with God and one another. The seeds of division bear no fruit, when we are pressuring others to think like us this brings about division. We can choose the way of the Spirit.

8) Be aware of treating the Synod as a kind of a parliament or citizens assembly. We can confuse synodality with political debate where one side defeats the other. It is counter to the spirit of synodality to provoke others or to encourage divisive conflicts that threaten the unity and communion of the Church.

9) Be aware of listening only to those who are already involved in Church activities. This approach may be easier to achieve, but it ignores a significant proportion of the People of God.

REFLECT

1. Which of the seven dispositions will you have to personally develop?

2. What strikes you about the nine pitfalls?

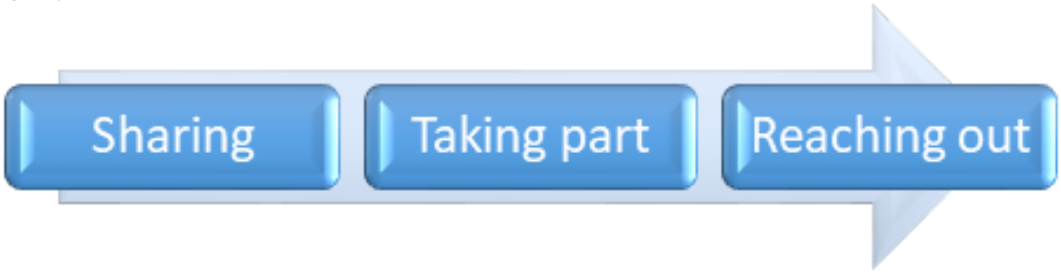
3. Which of the nine would you need to more aware of?

CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO THREE ON OUR DISPOSITIONS & PITFALLS

PRINCIPLES OF MAXIMUM PARTICIPATION

Reaching out to involve the greatest number of people possible, and especially those on the periphery who are often excluded and forgotten, is essential. This will maximise inclusion and participation and capture the true realities and lived experience of the People of God.

Because this engagement of the People of God is foundational, and a first taste of the experience of synodality for many, it is essential that each local listening exercise be guided by the principles of sharing in life, taking part, and reaching out that inspire this synodal path.



The unfolding of the synodal process at a local level must also involve:

- **Discernment** through listening, creating space for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- **Accessibility**, ensuring that as many as possible can take part, taking account of location, language, education, socio-economic status, ability/disability, and material resources.
- **Cultural awareness,** celebrating and including the diversity within local communities.
- **Inclusion**, making every effort to involve those who feel excluded or marginalized.
- **Fairness,** ensuring that participation in the listening process treats each person equally.
- **Partnership** based on the model of a co-responsible Church.
- **Accurate syntheses** that truly captures the range of critical and appreciative perspectives of all responses, including views that are expressed only by a minority of participants.
- **Respect** for the rights, dignity, and opinion of each participant.
- **Transparency,** ensuring that processes of invitation, involvement, inclusion, and collation of input are clear and well communicated.

LISTENING TO UNDERSTAND

The quality of our attention to one another will be crucial in the synodal pathway. How we listen can be more important than what we say. Careful listening helps us to understand the other person, to stand in their shoes.

When we really listen, we are not thinking about what we might say next, we are not listening to answer, we listen to understand. Listening to understand means we don't plan what we are going to say next until we have fully absorbed what the person we are listening to is saying.

NON-JUDGEMENT When we are listening to understand we do not make judgments. We listen to accept. We know the privilege of being trusted with the other person's story.

STAY WITH SILENCES Silence helps dialogue to happen. Slowing down helps us to focus. When someone is sharing give them space to be quiet. Don't be afraid of silences and fill them with unneeded words.

CHECK OUT If unsure about what is shared gently check out your own understanding. Listening to understand means checking out how others feel. Noticing emotion helps us to understand each other better.

DON'T RUSH TO SOLVE Rushing to solve the others' problems or issues can shut down all sharing, Check yourself to see if its your discomfort you are responding to!

ACCEPT HIGH EMOTIONS In deep sharing like dialogue emotions can be strong. The best way to acknowledge emotions is to allow them to happen in an atmosphere of acceptance.

ACCEPT YOUR OWN POWERLESSNESS Don't rush to sort things for the person sharing. In dialogue we are not trying to solve problems, we are just trying to be pilgrims together, simply listening.

CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO FOUR ON PARTICIPATION & LISTENING

THE TEN THEMES AND QUESTIONS TO INFORM THE DIALOGUE

The following themes will help us to focus our attention as we journey together

1. 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?

2. ON THE SAME ROAD

In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road. Are we aware of those who want to walk with us, and especially those who have grown apart or are on the margins?

3. THE QUALITY OF OUR LISTENING

Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice. We can ask ourselves how well do we listen to those who have differing views? How do we include voices that can sometimes be ignored?

4. SPEAKING OUT IN TRUTH

Everyone is invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity. What helps or hinders us from speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us?

5. ROOTED IN PRAYERFULNESS

"Walking together" is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist. How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community?

6. RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION IS SHARED

Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate. How is every baptised person hearing a call to participate in the mission of the Church? How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?

7. CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN DIALOGUE

Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding. What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church? How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed?

8. CONNECTED IN CHRIST

The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey. How are we building relationships and taking the next step in walking forward with each other?

9. CO-RESPONSIBILITY

A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church. How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice? How do Councils work and promote this? Who shares in authority and governance?

10. DISCERNING AND DECIDING TOGETHER

We make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community in a synodal style. How can the methods and processes we use in decision-making be improved? What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability?

CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO FIVE ON THE TEN INFORMING THEMES FOR SYNODALITY

STAGES AND PHASES ON THE SYNODAL PATHWAY (UPDATED)

FIRST PHASE: OCTOBER 2021

- Invitation at deanery meetings to begin the journey
- Diocesan Opening Liturgy 17th October Pro-Cathedral 3pm – parish representatives invited to take part
- Diocesan Webpage on Synodal Pathway available
- Orientation of Pastoral Ministers from the Five Areas on Zoom
- Identifying local animators for preparation
- Simply Synod flip booklet available
- Bitesize videos available
- Prayer resources developer

SECOND PHASE: NOVEMBER 2021 – JANUARY 2022

- 1st Training session of 2 hours for Local Animators – November 29th, 30th, December 1st, 2nd
- 2nd Training session of 2 hours for Local Animators – January 17th – 20th

THIRD PHASE: FEBRUARY - MARCH 2022

- Two Local Gatherings can take place between February 2022 – March 2022
- Animators dialogue with PPC's and agree dates and venues

FOURTH PHASE: APRIL 2022

- Local Animators widen their team to collate feedback discerning what is converging and diverging
- Digital Template provided for Local Collation of feedback from gatherings

FIFTH PHASE: MAY 2022

- Digital reports given to the Archbishop

OTHER RESOURCES FOR THE SYNODAL PATHWAY

On the **www.synod.va** you can find:

- The preparatory document
- The Vademecum document
- Up to date postings on development globally
- Pope Francis October 9th – The participation of everyone, guided by the Holy Spirit
- Pope Francis October 10th – Celebrating synod means walking together on the same road

For information about dialogue go to Fratelli Tutti at **www.vatican.va**

For information about the Synod with young people 2018 search for Christus Vivit at **www.vatican.va**

ARTICLES

- Synodality: Listening to the Spirit Together – Leaven Magazine Issue 8 available at **www.leavenmagazine.ie**
- Reality Magazine July/August 2021–
- Identifying a Synodal Pathway – Salvador Ryan
- Memories of a Synodal Church – Pat O'Sullivan
- Sacred Heart Messenger September 2021
- A New Church – Gerry O'Hanlon SJ
- National Catholic Reporter August 23, 2021
- A closer look at synodality and its promise for a more inclusive church – Hosffman Ospino

SOME HELPFUL BOOKS

- Meetings Matter: Spirituality and Skills for Meetings – Phyllis Brady and Brian Grogan Veritas Publications 2009
- Always Discerning: An Ignatian Spirituality for the New Millenium – Joseph Tetlow Loyola Press 2016
- Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future – Pope Francis in conversation with Austin Iveriegh Simon & Schuster Ltd 2020

APPENDIX

FROM THE ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
9th OCTOTOBER 2021

Dear brothers and sisters,
may this Synod be a true season of the Spirit!
For we need the Spirit, the ever new breath of God,
who sets us free from every form of self-absorption,
revives what is moribund,
loosens shackles and spreads joy.
The Holy Spirit guides us where God wants us to be,
not to where our own ideas
and personal tastes would lead us.
Father Congar, of blessed memory, once said:
"There is no need to create another Church,
but to create a different Church"
That is the challenge.
For a "different Church",
a Church open to the newness that God wants to suggest,
let us with greater fervour
and frequency invoke the Holy Spirit
and humbly listen to him,
journeying together as he, the source of communion and
mission, desires: with docility and courage.