

Synod 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.

Questions to prepare yourself for a parish conversation or a group listening event:

How is our "journeying together" as the Church happening today in your parish/community? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together"?

In responding to this question, you are invited to:

Recall your experiences:

- What experiences of your local Church – including reflecting on the time of the pandemic – does this question call to mind?

Re-read these experiences in greater depth:

- What has the experience taught us about what it means to be Church? "When we say 'our Church', who is part of it?" How does your particular Church ensure you are part of the 'journey'? Who is missing?
- What would you wish to celebrate about how your parish/community lives its mission?
- What areas of mission are we neglecting?

Gather the fruits to share:

- What might the Holy Spirit be saying to us?
- What steps might the Spirit be inviting us to take in order to make our communities more welcoming, inclusive and missionary?

Journeying Together Participant's Guide

Diocese of Westminster

"I encourage you to take this synodal process seriously and tell you that the Holy Spirit needs you. And this is true: the Holy Spirit needs us. Listen to it by listening to yourself. Don't leave anyone out or behind." Pope Francis to the faithful of the Diocese of Rome, 18 September 2021

Pope Francis has launched a worldwide 'synod' process. Synod simply means 'journeying together'. The Holy Father is inviting us to listen deeply to one another and to discern what God is saying to the Church about how we 'journey together'. We will have our own synodal pathway, within our parishes and communities in the Diocese of Westminster, united with every diocese across the world. Then, after national and continental gatherings, the Synod of Bishops will gather in Rome in 2023 to reflect on what has been heard.

'The purpose of the Synod ... is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts and restore strength to our hands for our common mission.' *Vademecum, Vatican's Synod Preparation Document 32Vademecum, for the Synod on Synodality, from the Synod of Bishops, Rome. #2.1*

"Pope Francis is inviting us to listen again to each other, hearing experiences of faith with all its joys and disappointments, and to find new ways of strengthening each other. It is an opportunity for us to show our care for the family of the Church. Please do take it up in whatever ways you can."
Cardinal Vincent Nichols Pastoral Letter,
3 October 2021



We will begin by listening to one another, sharing our experience of travelling together in the challenging time of the pandemic. We will also consider our wider experience of journeying together, as members of the Church and alongside others journeying in the world.

You will be invited to take part in your own parish or community, with opportunities to take part in simple ways as well as group listening events. The Synod Diocesan team is also organising online listening events and events around the Diocese hosted by the Cardinal or an Auxiliary Bishop. Please check www.rcdow.org.uk/synod for details.

These events will enable you to both speak and to listen deeply to others. It is important that we all prepare for our participation in the synodal pathway by reflecting on the questions at the end of this leaflet.

Take time to pray

- Pray quietly and invite the Spirit of God to guide you.
- Pray the Synod Prayer (see back page)
- Use the Prayer and Reflection resources at www.rcdow.org.uk/synod

Reflect on Scripture

The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24, 13-35)

"Two disciples were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them, 'What matters are you discussing as you walk along?' They stopped short, their faces downcast. Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days'. 'What things?' he asked."

Reflect:

- Jesus journeys with the disciples on the road. How do you experience your 'journey' with the Church community? With God?
- Jesus asks 'what things?' What is your answer to Jesus – what things have happened on your journey?

Download Scripture reflections at www.rcdow.org.uk/synod

Preparing to Listen from the Heart

'Synodal dialogue' depends on courage both in speaking and in listening. It is not about debate, but about discerning what the Spirit of God may be saying. Discernment is the attitude of people who believe that God is always present and active in the details of our lives. It relies on the conviction that he will reveal his plans and purposes to us if we make an effort to be attentive. It begins with listening.

Active Listening

The goal is to try and understand others as they are. The fundamental question is: "What is happening in the other person and in me, and how is the Lord working here?"

- We listen to what is being said, not focussing on what we will say afterwards
- We give full attention and presence to the person who is speaking.
- We allow ourselves to be influenced and learn from the other
- We welcome the speaker without judgment – each person is the expert on his or her own life. This requires humility, openness, patience.
- We are able to sit with silence
- We have an awareness that the Holy Spirit speaks to us through the other person.

Speaking from the Heart

- We sincerely express ourselves, our experience, our sentiments and thoughts.
- We offer a generous gift to the other, in return for being actively listened to.
- We speak about our own experience as we see it and as we live it, but do not impose our judgements on others.
- We take responsibility not only for what we say, but also for what we feel. We do not blame others for what we feel.

Preparation questions

- What has been your experience of the Church 'journeying together', throughout the pandemic and wider? When does the journeying bring joy? When might it bring pain?
- When we say 'Church', who do we mean?
- What might the Spirit of God be saying about how we journey together as the Church?