

# PARTICIPANTS GUIDE

for

# PARISH SESSIONS

**Synod 2021-2023 in the Diocese of London**

*Together on the Road  
Conversations for a Listening Church  
in the Diocese of London*



DIOCESE OF  
**LONDON**

# Preparing our Hearts and Voices

As we prepare to enter into this experience of Church,  
we invite you to prepare through reflection and prayer

## **For a Synodal Church**

Communion | Participation | Mission

## **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.

**Thank you** for registering to participate in our Synod Listening Sessions. In this intentional process of mutual listening, Pope Francis wants us to rediscover the joy of being the People of God who journeys together, listening to everyone.

## **What is Synodality?**

It's the official process of the Church of listening to the guidance of the Holy Spirit on a particular subject. We engage in open dialogue while listening to the Holy Spirit, open to the perspectives of others, with members of the Church, other Christians and the whole of society. Giving prayerful input on the needs of the Church today and the mission of Christ to all people in the world.

## **We are called to Listen, to be Open, to Share and Discern the Vision**

We are called to listen humbly and to speak courageously; to listen in a manner that invites others to share authentically while we ourselves share our experiences and hopes with mercy and charity. We gather in prayer, listen to the Word of God, then reflect in silence, letting the Holy Spirit guide us. Setting aside our own expectations so that we can listen more clearly to what God desires of us. This is an opportunity to hear things from other points of view, a different perspective. Allowing the Spirit to direct us in ways which will vision the needs of the Church and the mission of Christ in the world.

## **Listening Session Group Etiquette**

The following ground rules will help ensure the listening session is a safe place to talk and everyone is treated with reverence and respect.

- One person speaks at a time
- We will all listen with an open mind
- We will be stopping the conversation at certain intervals to reflect and pray
- We limit how long we speak so that everyone has time to share
- We only speak once until everyone has had an opportunity to share
- We will be reporting the themes and experiences to the diocese as they emerge from the consultation discussions without indicating the names of individual participants.
- As participants, when we tell others of our experience of the consultation, we will not attribute anything we share to particular people or groups.

After the session, if you have additional thoughts to add, a link to a web page will be provided where you will be able to submit additional thoughts, ideas and reflections.

## Session Overview

### Each session will follow a similar format

- Welcome
- Gathering Prayer
- The Word of God - Gospel Reading
- Gospel Reflection
- Prayer
- First Round of Synodal Questions with Reflection Questions and Sharing at Tables or in Breakout Rooms
- Second Round of Synodal Questions with Reflection Questions and Sharing at Tables or in Breakout Rooms
- The Word of God - Gospel Reading
- Summary of Main Themes from each Table
- Closing Comments and Closing Prayer

During the listening session you will be given the opportunity to:

- Listen to the answers of other participants
- Share your responses to a couple of questions
- Respond to the messages you hear

We invite you to prepare some thoughts before you participate in the listening session using the questions below. The preparation documents from the Vatican for this synod remind us, "The mission of the Church requires the entire People of God to be on a journey together, with each member playing his or her crucial role, united with each other." (*Vademucum* 1.2, available at this [link](#)).

### We will consider these questions

For the First Round:

1. What have been your experiences of journeying together with the Catholic Church?
  - a. What joy did these experiences bring?
  - b. What difficulties and obstacles have you encountered?

For the Second Round

2. As we journey forward together, what are your hopes and dreams for the Church?

**The following themes have been identified by the Vatican as important to consider during this synodal process.** They can be prayerfully used as guide as you reflect on your answers to the questions.

- Being Companions To Each Other On The Journey: In the Church and in society, we are side by side on the same road.

- Listening To the Spirit And Each Other: Listening is the first step, but it requires having an open mind and heart, without prejudice.
- Speaking Out: All are invited to speak with courage, integrating freedom, truth and charity
- Celebrating Together: “Journeying together” is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.
- 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.
- Joining Dialogue In Church And In Wider Society: Dialogue is a path of perseverance that also includes silences and sufferings, but which is capable of gathering the experience of persons and peoples.
- Participating In Ecumenism: The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.
- Each Claiming Their Proper Authority And Participation: A synodal Church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.
- Being Part Of Discerning And Deciding: In a synodal style, decisions are made through discernment, based on a consensus that flows from the common obedience to the Spirit.
- Forming Ourselves In Synodality: The spirituality of journeying together is called to become an educational principle for the formation of the human person and of the Christian, of the families and of the communities.

While your preparation for the listening session is encouraged, do not be discouraged if you don't have time or if something is holding you back. We do not want, or expect you to, bring fully prepared written answers. There will be further instructions and a small amount of reflection time for you at the listening session. (You may bring notes from your reflections if you'd like.)

Wherever you are in your faith journey or season of life, we want to hear from you!