SYNOD HANDBOOK

FOR PARISH / GROUP COORDINATORS

SYNOD HANDBOOK

SCDOS



Guide for facilitating synodal consultation adapted for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

JANUARY 2022

Synod 2021 - 2023
For a synodal Church

COMMUNION | PARTICIPATION | MISSION



SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

Diocese of Saskatoon

WHAT IS A SYNOD?

Synod comes from two Greek words: "with" and "path or way or road." It reflects on our Christian identity as disciples of Jesus journeying with each other on the path and assembling in answer to Jesus' summon to be faithful to our vocation: "Synodality enables the entire people of God to walk forward together, listening to the Holy Spirit and Word of God, to participate in the mission of the Church in the communion that Christ establishes between us."

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Every baptized Catholic is to participate in this synod wherever the church is manifested. It could be within parishes, religious communities, lay movements, youth organizations, etc. Yet the synod is not restricted to the baptized. We also need to hear the voices of other people in our local context, who are willing to accompany us in this journey. We are obliged to invite such people.

WHAT IS THE AIM OF A SYNOD?

Quite unlike previous synods that focused on other themes, like New Evangelization or youth, the present synod focuses on the topic of synodality itself. What makes this synod peculiar and difficult to understand is that the topic and method are the same. We are journeying together to deliberate on what it means to journey together. It strives to build collaboration.

WHAT ARE THE LOGISTICS?

We intend to journey together in groups. Each group is required to have a coordinator and a committee to steer the process. The coordinator should be in touch with the diocesan contact person, whom the bishop appoints. A website is dedicated to the process at rcdos.ca/synod. The challenge is to get people to participate in the synod and also to have a good grasp of the reflection questions (look at section 5.2 and Appendix B of the Vademecum).

WHAT ATTITUDES SHOULD WE CULTIVATE?

The synod emphasises the process of discernment, which is a gift from God but it also requires our involvement through prayer, reflection, and paying attention to our inner dispositions. Speaking courageously and listening with humility, with the willingness to change our views or perspectives is integral to the process. Consequently, any form of clericalism should be discarded. We are equally invited to become beacons of hope instead of prophets of doom, which could result from focusing on problems.

WHAT ARE THE PITFALLS ON THE WAY?

This synod emphasizes listening to God, through listening to each other, and reading the signs of the times, inspired by the word of God. Consequently, we should avoid treating it like a corporate strategic affair. While we are going to have reports at the end of the process it should not be our major concern. We should also avoid dwelling on ourselves and our narrow ecclesial concerns and problems. We must not lose sight of the objective of the synod, which is an exploration of co-responsibility.



CONTACT: HEATHER FIOLLEAU HDFIOLLEAU@RCDOS.CA 306.659.5824

The Five Step Synod Process













Choose a Coordinator

December 23, 2021

Start a committee or small group HERE.



Review the Basics

January 5 and 27, February 16, 2022 Attend Coordinator <u>Zoom Training</u>

Consider introducing to Parish Council, etc.



Plan to Implement

Resources Create a plan with your small group or committee. Synodality at rcdos.ca/synod



Complete the Process

Collation of Reports from the Parishes and Pre-Synod



Submit Information

May 2022

Information will be compiled by the Diocese, brought to CCCB and sent to Rome.

Pre-Synod Diocesan Review held May 18, 2022

Find out more at: RCDOS.CA

or contact Heather Fiolleau at hdfiolleau@rcdos.ca or 306.659.5824



Liturgical Celebration

Ground Rules

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(APPENDIX E)

Short Opening Remarks

7 Small Group Discussion
PAGE 7
(APPENDICES A,B,D)

Explanation of the Process

Large Group Sharing

Introduction of participants

Summary/Evaluation

5 Ice Breaker Activity

Sending Forth Prayer

Total Duration: 1½ to 2 hours

Note: Each local parish/group can assign time to the different sections at their discretion.

APPENDIX A - Questions for Discussion: Ages 18 & Older

APPENDIX B - Questions for Discussion: Ages Under 18

APPENDIX C - Parish/Group Synod Process Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities

APPENDIX D - Guide for Facilitating a Synodal Consultation

APPENDIX E - Ground Rules for Synodal Consultations

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Synod Consultation



LITURGICAL CELEBRATION:

Due to the spiritual and reflective nature of this synodal process, we encourage you to begin the session with a simple liturgical celebration. Here is a suggested format:



- Opening Song: All Are Welcome (https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=GlnVLPOqFEo) or other appropriate hymns.
- Scripture Reading: Read Mark 10:17.
 You could read parts of Pope Francis'
 Homily, at the Inaugural Mass of the
 Synod. It highlights three verbs:
 ENCOUNTER, LISTENING,

DISCERNMENT which define the synod. You could also use the following alternative readings: Lk 24: 13-35; Mt 5:13-16; Jn 16: 12-15; Lk 8:16-18a; Acts 2: 1-11, 14-19; Gal 5: 1-24; 1 Cor 12: 12-26; 1 Cor 12: 27-31.

- Quiet Reflection Time (a few minutes)
- Conclude the Liturgical Celebration by Reciting the Prayer of Adsumus,
 Sancte Spiritus:

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.

OPENING REMARKS

VIDEO FROM BISHOP MARK HAGEMOEN

3 EXPLANATION OF THE PROCESS

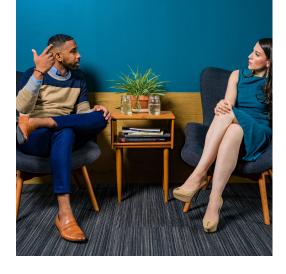
- This synodal journey is a special time of prayer, listening, dialogue, and recommendations.
- This is our opportunity to respond to the request of Pope Francis to dream about the Church we
 are called to be.
- This is our opportunity let our voices be heard.
- It is not about organizing events or theorizing about problems, as in taking time to ENCOUNTER LISTEN TO EACH OTHER and DISCERN TOGETHER.
- By gathering as a people of faith, we hope to create a deeper relationship, to learn from one
 another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, to warm hearts, and to restore strength for our
 common mission.
- Focus on one main question set per session. You are encouraged to hold up to 7 sessions, one
 per week to address all questions.
- By the end of our time together, we aim to capture your answers to the basic question: What is the Holy Spirit saying to the Church today?

INTRODUCTION OF PARTICIPANTS

We recommend that those participating in group discussion are not larger than 8 people. If this is the case smaller groups should be formed. Participants should introduce each other before the actual group discussion. This equally applies when using the online option. In this case a brief introduction in the break out rooms will be proper.

5 ICE BREAKER

We suggest, whenever possible, that you include a short activity to help the participant to create an environment of trust in order to prepare them to work together.





6 GROUND RULES

SEE APPENDIX E

Explain the ground rules for engagement in the group discussion. It is found in Appendix E of this handbook.

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SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

OUR CURRICULUM

Provide a copy of the questions to each person (see Appendix A for ages 18 & older and Appendix B for ages under 18). Separate handouts are also provided.

Group Facilitators (see Appendix D: Guide for Facilitating a Synodal Consultation).

Each group should choose one person to lead discussion and one person who will record the responses of the group members.

- Focus on one set of questions per session.
- Answers can be written down in a form of brief summaries or key points in bullet form. This may be recorded on a page provided by the diocese (Small Group Discussion Recorder Notes) or digitally as individual comfort and access to materials and technology allows.
- A summary of the group discussion may be recorded on a separate page provided by the diocese (Summary of Small Group Discussion) and will be shared in the large group and handed to the parish/group coordinator.

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LARGE GROUP SHARING

OUTCOME OF SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- $\bullet \quad \text{After the small group discussion, participants will return to the large group.} \\$
- A representative from each small group shares from their small group conversation with the larger gathering.

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SUMMARY/EVALUATION

BRIEF PLENARY

- At the final session, each participant should be provided with a sheet of paper by the diocese (Individual Evaluation Sheet).
- They may be prompted with the following:
- Please describe in one short paragraph your experience of being part of this local synodal consultation.
- Highlight what you like the most, what you like the least.
- Share your hope and expectations for this Synod on Synodality.

10 GRATITUDE & SEND FORTHPRAYER

A sincere word of gratitude to all those who organized, coordinated, and participated in this synodal process, in this or similar words: "Guided by the Holy Spirit, we make up the living stones through whom God builds up the Church that he desires for the third millennium (1 Peter 2:5). May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles and Mother of the Church, intercede for us as we journey together on the path that God sets before us. As in the Upper Room at Pentecost, may her maternal care and intercession accompany us as we build up our communion with one another and carry out our mission in the world. With her, we say together as the People of God: "Let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

Reader: A reading from the Letter of St. James 1:27

"Dearest brothers and sisters: Humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you...[and] Be doers of the word and not hearers only."

Leader: Come Holy Spirit, we ask you, that by your inspiration, may all of our prayer and actions always begin from you and inspire others to know you more deeply. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

Leader: Let us go forth sharing a sign of peace.





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ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SASKATOON 123 NELSON ROAD SASKATOON, SK S7S 1H1 RCDOS.CA/SYNOD



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION: FOR AGES 18 & OVER (use handouts provided with the coordinator materials)

Please read this instruction carefully to the group; if possible, repeat it to be sure all understand the level of reflection required of them.

The questions below are meant to help us respond to the fundamental question: A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together." How is this "journeying together" happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together"? (PD, 26). In this light, you need to consider how you currently journey together in your parishes or groups, recalling your actual experiences and re-reading these experiences, so as to shape your discernment.

1. COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

"In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road."

- Q1 Who are those walking together in your parish community or group?
- Q2 Who are those who seem further apart?
- Q3 How are you called, as a person, a parish or a group, to journey with others?
- Q4 What groups or individuals are left on the margins in your parish or group?
- Q5 Do you have any idea of the sequence of events that caused this to happen?

2. LISTENING

"Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice."

- Q1 How is God speaking to you through voices you sometimes ignore, including those at the peripheries?
- Q2 How are you listened to in your parish, especially if you are a woman or a young person?
- Q3 What facilitates or inhibits your listening in a social and cultural context?
- Q4 How do we integrate the contribution of consecrated men and women?
- Q5 What are some limitations in your ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than your own?
- What action can you take to make more space in your life to listen to the voices of the minorities, especially people who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?
- Q7 How might your parish or group listen better?

3. SPEAKING OUT

"All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity."

- What enables or hinders you from speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in our local Church and in society?
- Q2 What would encourage you to communicate what is important to you?
- Q3 What is the relationship of your parish or group to the local media (not only Catholic media)?
- Q4 Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?

4. CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN OUR COMMON MISSION

"Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate."

- Q1 Since each of us are missionary disciples, how are you/we called to participate in the mission of the Church?
- Q2 What hinders you from being active in mission?
- Q3 What areas of mission are you neglecting?
- Q4 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.)?
- Q5 How does the Church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way?
- Q6 —How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?





5. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

"Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding."

- Q1 To what extent do diverse peoples in our community come together for dialogue?
- Q2 What are the places where dialogue happens within our parish?
- Q3 In what way does dialogue happen in our parish?
- Q4 How do we promote collaboration with neighbouring dioceses, religious communities, lay associations and movements, etc.?
- Q5 How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed in your parish?
- **Q6** What particular issues in the Church and society, do you think, we need to pay more attention to?
- What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation?
- Q8 How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the spheres of politics, economics, culture, civil society, and people who live in poverty?

6. DISCERNING AND DECIDING

"In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community."

- Q1 What methods and processes do we use in decision-making?
- Q2 In your view, how can they be improved?
- Q3 How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures?
- Q4 In your view, what decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God? Explain.
- Q5 What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice?
- Q6 What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability?
- Q7 How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?

7. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

- Q1 What steps can I take to build friendship, awareness and reconciliation between people?
- Q2 How can I be a man/ woman who lives 'reconciliation' and 'healing'?
- Q3 How can our local faith community be more welcoming and open to indigenous peoples?
- Q4 Do I know the closest Indigenous communities to my home/parish? What can I do to be a 'neighbour'?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION: FOR AGES UNDER 18 (use handouts provided with the coordinator materials)

Please read this instruction carefully to the group; if possible, repeat it to be sure all understand the level of reflection required of them.

The questions below are meant to help us respond to the fundamental question: A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together." How is this "journeying together" happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together"? (PD, 26). In this light, you need to consider how you currently journey together in your parishes or groups, recalling your actual experiences and re-reading these experiences, so as to shape your discernment.

1. OUR COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

"In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road"

- Q1 Do I feel at home in the Church?
- Q2 Can I easily find someone to journey with, in the Church, to help me grow in my faith?

One thing I can:

- Start doing.
- Stop doing.
- Keep doing.

2. LISTENING

"Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice"

- Q1 Do I feel listened to when I participate, at some point, in the parish, groups, etc.?
- Q2 Do I believe that the Church is interested in the life, opinion and contributions of the excluded, marginalized, etc.?
- Q3 Are social problems/issues part of the life, message and mission of the church?

One thing I can:

- Start doing.
- Stop doing.
- Keep doing.

3. SPEAKING OUT

"All are invited to speak with courage, truth, freedom and charity"

- Q1 Do channels exist that allow me to express myself and give my opinion in the parish?
- Q2 Am I able to speak and share my thoughts and opinions with other parishioners/group members?

One thing I can:

- Start doing.
- Stop doing.
- Keep doing.





4. CELEBRATION

"Walking together is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the Celebration of the Eucharist"

- Q1 Do the liturgical celebrations, especially Sunday Mass and other religious/faith group gatherings in which I participate, have meaning for my life?
- Q2 Do I consider my prayer life valuable and does it influence my personal and communal decisions?
- Q3 Has my parish found ways to make all people, including cultural communities, youth, families and persons with disabilities and their families, to participate actively in its life, especially Sunday Mass?

One thing I can:

- Start doing.
- Stop doing.
- Keep doing.

5. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

"A synodal Church is a participatory and co-responsible Church"

- Q1 Are responsibilities shared, In the Church, between laity, religious and priests/clergy/youth/elderly?
- Q2 Are youth groups supported and accompanied when they make proposals and act in your parish?
- Q3 Do I feel some responsibility for the well-being of my parish/faith community?
- Q4 Am I actively engaged, sharing my time and talents, within my parish or faith community?

One thing I can:

- Start doing.
- Stop doing.
- Keep doing.

6. 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."

- Q1 Is my parish open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making decisions?
- Q2 Do I find support and accompaniment when I need to make major decisions in my parish or group?
- Q3 Do all parishioners share in the decision making of my parish?
- Q4 Are transparency, accountability and responsibility are promoted in my parish?

One thing I can:

- Start doing.
- Stop doing.
- Keep doing.

7. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

"The spirituality of journeying together is meant to become an educational principle for the formation of the human person and for Christian families, and communities."

- Q1 Are there spaces for dialogue in the Church and are the opinions of young people, women and men taken into account?
- Q2 Am I willing to listen to people even if they have different opinions from me?
- Q3 Am I open to welcome and befriend people from different faith and cultural backgrounds?

One thing I can:

- Start doing.
- Stop doing.
- Keep doing.



PARISH/GROUP SYNOD PROCESS COORDINATOR ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles:

- To serve as liaison between the local parish/group and the Synod diocesan contact;
- To serve as the main contact person of his/her local parish/group regarding the synodal process; and
- To assist the pastor by facilitating large or small group Listening Sessions.

Responsibilities:

A. BEFORE THE CONSULTATION PROCESS (PREPARATION STAGE):

- Read the Handbook for the consultation process.
- Attend a coordinator's training session (remote via Zoom) on January 5, 27, or February 16, 2022.
- In collaboration with the pastor, ensure the participation of the greatest number possible (all categories of parishioners and non-parishioners are invited to take part in the collaboration process).
- Organize the gatherings with the people in the local community. (Anywhere from 1 to 7 sessions discussing one main question per session.) Gatherings can be done in person or online.
- In consultation with the pastor, choose the one main question that will be discussed along with the related subsection questions.
- Ensure that each local listening exercise be done in a prayerful and reflective manner and guided by the principles of communion, participation, and mission.
- Form a committee to help with the process. Members of this committee will help in organizing the environment and materials for the process. They will help in facilitating small groups, as needed.

B. DURING THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

- Welcome and thank individuals who have gathered to listen and share.
- Lead the Prayer/Liturgical Celebration contained in the Synod Handbook.
- Inform the participants about the purpose and method to be used at the consultation process.
- If there are more than 8 participants, break into small groups. Each group is to designate a leader and a recorder.
- Pose the listening session questions using the handouts provided to those who have gathered to share feedback.
- Keep track of time and ensure that all questions within the main focus question chosen for the session are asked, prayed about, and discussed during the agreed upon length of the session. Make sure to set aside time for personal preparation/reflection because this is crucial for a fruitful dialogue.
- Inform the participants about the next stage of the synodal process, so that they know how their input will contribute to the whole Church.
- Thank the participants and conclude the gathering with a prayer.
- If people are unable to attend a meeting in person or online, efforts should be made to reach out to them through text messaging, phone calls or other appropriate means. It is important to try, as much as possible, to listen to the voices of everyone, especially those who are marginalized.

C. AFTER THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

- Receive the summary from all the listening sessions from the small group recorders.
- Read through, pray with, and discern themes from all the information gathered.
- Discuss with the team and the pastor the results of your reading, prayer and discernment.
- Prepare the Synthesis
 - Provide accurate synthesis that truly captures the range of critical and appreciative perspectives of all responses, including views that are expressed only by minority of participants or voices of those who are not often heard.
 - Feedback should not only underline positive experiences but also bring to light challenging and negative experiences in order to reflect the reality of what has been heard.
 - Transparency, ensuring that the process of invitation, involvements, inclusion, and collection of input are clear and well communicated.
 - Submit the summary/synthesis of the responses and feedback received from the parish/group gatherings to the diocesan contact, or submit online (recommended). This should also include something of the experience of the local gathering: the attitudes of the participants, and the joys and challenges of engaging together in discernment.
- Pray with the information gathered through the parish listening sessions and represent the parish at the diocesan Pre-Synod Event in May 2022.





GUIDE FOR FACILITATING A SYNODAL CONSULTATION

- A. As facilitator you will be asked to:
 - Establish clear boundaries of time and topic for speakers.
 - Gently interrupt a speaker who talks disproportionately more than others.
 - Gently interrupt and redirect a speaker who gets off topic.
 - Gently re-focus a speaker who is preoccupied with an issue that is not pertinent to the topic or inhibits the participation of others in the group.
- B. It helps to set ground rules and expectations at the start of the consultation by emphasizing the need for broad participation and safety. Some examples of boundary-related ground rules are:
 - One person speaks at a time and the others listen attentively.
 - Discernment means speaking, listening and prayerfully reflecting so pausing in silence between speakers to consider what is said is a good approach.
 - Speak when you can add to the conversation, not when you are trying to intentionally end it.
 - Stay on topic.
 - Keep your comments reasonably brief so others have time to participate.
 - This is a forward-leaning conversation, so lean toward solutions.
 - If someone offers a comment in the form of a complaint, ask the person to reframe her/his comment in the form of a hope or aspiration.

C. If you have to interrupt a speaker, it helps to acknowledge their contribution by providing a brief synthesis of what you heard them say and thank them for their contribution.





APPENDIX E

GROUND RULES FOR SYNODAL CONSULTATIONS

- 1. This consultation is a safe place to talk we will treat each other and what anyone says with reverence and respect.
- 2. One person speaks at a time.
- 3. We all will listen with an open mind and heart.
- 4. We will be stopping the conversation at certain intervals to reflect and pray.
- 5. Our primary mode is dialogue: when we speak our purpose is to advance the conversation. Please avoid arguing or comments that seek to advance a personal agenda.
- 6. We limit how long we speak so that everyone has time to share.
- 7. We only speak once until everyone has had an opportunity to share.
- 8. We will be reporting the themes and experiences to the diocese and bishops' conference as they emerge from the consultation discussions without indicating the names of individual participants.
- 9. As participants, when we tell others of our experience of the consultation, we will not attribute anything we share to particular people or groups.



