



FACILITATOR GUIDE

Listening Session #1

Walking together, inspired by the Holy Spirit



Thank you for serving as Facilitator for Listening Session #1 in your community in this first phase of the 2021-2023 Synod of Bishops! The theme for this synod is “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.” Synodality expresses the nature of the Church as the People of God journeying together on the same path.

Pope Francis has called the entire People of God to journey together! This is an unprecedented moment in our Church. The Holy Father has called for listening on a scale we have never before seen. All the baptized in every diocese, in every country, on every continent are asked to participate in the synod process. As the Church, we will pray together, listen to one another and seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance in discerning where the Holy Spirit is leading us as a parish, a diocese, and a universal Church.

In this Facilitator Guide you will find a script for you to follow for the first listening session. A second Facilitator Guide is being provided for the second listening session. Please take the time in advance of the listening session to become very familiar with the content of this Guide. A Sign-In Sheet and Note Taker Form may be found in the Parish Toolkit. You’ll also find a Checklist in the Parish Toolkit. Please review the Checklist to ensure that everything is taken care of before the Listening Session so that all will go as smoothly as possible.

Thanks, once again, for your willingness to serve! Remember that this is the Holy Spirit’s work. We do what we can to create a welcoming and prayerful environment and we trust in the Holy Spirit to do the rest. Come, Holy Spirit!

BEFORE THE SESSION

- **Facilitator:** The Facilitator will use the following script to lead the session. If the participants speak more than one language appoint a bilingual facilitator or a facilitator for each language. The main responsibilities of the facilitator are to:
 - Help everyone feel welcome. Ensure a safe space by reminding everyone to be respectful and kind.
 - Gently invite everyone to participate, without forcing people to speak if they choose not to do so. Respect confidentiality.
 - Avoid dominating the conversation or allowing anyone else to dominate.
 - Stress that sessions are about listening to one another and discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit. The objective is not advocacy or convincing anyone of anything.
- **Hospitality:** To help in creating a space that is comfortable and conducive to listening and sharing, you might consider providing some appetizers, snacks, beverages or even a shared meal before the start of the session. Alternatively, you could provide some coffee, apple cider or other warm beverage as an act of hospitality. Invite people to come a bit early to enjoy some fellowship. As always, be sure to follow proper Covid protocols.
- **Arrangement of chairs:** Provide a physical set up that allows for people to be arranged in small groups with a maximum of 5-6 people per group.

- **Holy Water:** Provide a vessel of holy water if you choose to incorporate it into the prayer. (If an ordained minister is present, you may want to provide for the sprinkling of holy water.)
- **Alternate Prayer:** If non-Catholics or people who do not regularly attend Mass have been invited to the listening session, it might be most appropriate to replace the opening prayer and renewal of baptismal promises with the Prayer for the Synod on Synodality found on the last page of the Participant Guide.
- **Participant Guide:** Each participant should receive a Participant Guide and a pen as they enter. Alternatively, these items can be set at each place.
- **Sign-in Sheet:** Please ask everyone to sign-in using the Sign-In Sheet in the Parish Toolkit. (A copy of the Sign-In Sheet should be submitted to the Diocese after the listening session.)
- **Small Group Moderator:** One person from each small group will be asked to serve as the moderator. Their role is to review with their group the Respectful Communication Guidelines on page 2 of the Participant Guide as well as ensuring that each small group member has a chance to share if desired.
- **Note Taker Form & Note Cards:** One person from each small group will be asked to take notes on the sharing that happens in their group. Place a Note Taker Form, pen and some note cards on each table. (Note Taker Forms may be found in the Parish Toolkit.) These Note Taker Forms will be collected by the parish and submitted to the diocese by mail or via the online portal at: <https://owensborodiocese.org/synod>. The role of the note taker is to:
 - Using the Note Taker Form, capture the consensus of the group and any themes that come up through the discussion.
 - Record significant moments and breakthrough ideas.
 - Keep notes brief, but include enough information so that people not present in the group will understand the essence of what occurred and what was shared.
 - Individuals may write their comments on note cards if they feel uncomfortable or do not have a chance to share everything with their small group.
 - Individuals may also submit feedback directly to the Diocese via the online portal at: <https://owensborodiocese.org/synod>

AFTER THE SESSION

- **Note Taker Forms, Note Cards & Sign-In-Sheet:** Please collect all Note Taker Forms and note cards from every small group and the Sign-In Sheet and submit to the Diocese of Owensboro. Submission instructions are on the last page of this Facilitator Guide.
- **Next Listening Session:** Make sure your parish knows when the next listening session will be held and encourage all to attend.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION*4 minutes*

The pastor or facilitator welcomes the participants. Introduce yourself and invite the participants to introduce themselves to the others in their small group.

OVERVIEW OF THE PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION*4 minutes*

The facilitator offers an overview in these or other words.

Facilitator:

In our gathering today (tonight), as we listen, share, and pray, we take part in a practice that dates back to the earliest Church. Throughout our history, the Church has gathered in councils or synods to open our hearts to the voice of the Holy Spirit. What makes this Synod different, however, is the unprecedented listening that Pope Francis is asking of every diocese throughout the world. The Holy Father wants to hear the voice of every baptized person and has asked diocesan bishops everywhere to consult with the People of God in their dioceses. This is the first time that the entire people of God have been invited to speak to their bishops of their hopes and dreams for their parish, their diocese, and the world in such a formal manner.

The word “synod” is rooted in Greek and means “journeying together”. It is by virtue of our Baptism that together, from every corner of the earth, we form the People of God who are traveling the same road in living out our Christian life. As baptized people, the Holy Spirit speaks and works through each one of us. Because of this truth, the Church is much better equipped to make pastoral decisions that reflect the will of God if it has first listened to the voices of its members since the Holy Spirit lives in each of us.

Pope Francis has called this Synod for the purpose of focusing on synodality – on how we are “traveling together” as pilgrims on our way

to heaven – in order to become a Church that listens well. Our purpose here tonight (today) is to listen to one another, to speak what the Holy Spirit places on our hearts, and to pray for discernment in where the Holy Spirit is leading us as a parish, a diocese and a universal Church.

The handbook for the synod issued by the Vatican states: *“The purpose of this Synod . . . is to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people’s 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.”*

In the Diocese of Owensboro, there will be two phases of listening. The first will be listening in parishes and other Catholic organizations and groups during the months of January and February. Then Bishop Medley will host regional listening sessions in various locations across the Diocese during the month of March. Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend one of those sessions where Bishop Medley will be there to listen to the people that God has called him to serve.

This is an exciting moment for our Church. When we devote such time and energy to listening to the Holy Spirit, great fruit will surely be the result.

EXPLANATION OF THE PROCESS

<i>4 minutes</i>

Facilitator:

This is a big conversation to have and it would be difficult to complete our task in one session. So tonight’s (today’s) listening session is the

first of two sessions in our parish. Pope Francis wants to hear from everyone. But when we look around the room, we know that many voices are missing from this conversation. In order to reach more of those whose voices may remain unheard, we will each leave here tonight (today) with an important assignment. Before we come back together for our second session, you will be asked to go out and have a conversation with someone on the periphery. You'll find a tool in your Participant Guide that will help with the conversation.

This conversation could be with someone who has left the Church, someone who rarely or never practices their faith, someone who experiences poverty or marginalization, refugees, the excluded, the voiceless. By seeking them out and meeting them in conversation, you can return here to our next session to be their voice and to share with the rest of us what you've heard from them or even to invite them to come to the second session with you. People on the periphery don't generally come to us. Pope Francis is telling us that we must go to them. Their voices deserve to be heard.

You are also invited to dive deeper into synodality before our second session to reflect further on this topic of journeying together, either individually or as a group. This could be as a couple or family, in a prayer group, youth group, retreat, faith formation class, parish council or committee meeting, RCIA meeting, or with clients in an outreach. This reflection will enrich our sharing when we come back together as a group. You can find a tool on the diocesan website to help you in your deep dive into synodality.

The highlights of what is shared here will be recorded by a note taker in your group. All input from our parish will be shared with the Diocese of Owensboro and will be used by Bishop Medley in compiling a synthesis of what has been seen and heard across the diocese during

this period of listening to the Holy Spirit. You may also submit comments about your conversations in the periphery or reflections in small groups directly to the diocese via the online portal on the Diocese of Owensboro website.

PRAYER & REFLECTION ON SCRIPTURE

20 minutes

Facilitator:

For this evening (morning / afternoon), we are inviting you to enter into a place of prayer, reflection, listening and sharing. We will follow a ritual of listening to the Word of God followed by some sharing in your small group.

The Synod process involves active listening. Listening is at the heart of our conversation today. Remember to give your full attention to each other and listen to the voice of God in your hearts. Listen for understanding by taking to heart what other people share. As we share, individuals will speak, one at a time, without interruption, while others listen. Everyone will have a chance to speak and, of course, if you like, you may choose to pass.

I invite you now into a moment of silence as we begin our prayerful reflection and sharing.

Allow for a moment of silence.

Either the Facilitator or the Pastor leads the prayer.

The prayer may begin around a vessel with holy water if desired.

An opening hymn may be sung. It would be most appropriate to sing a hymn invoking the Holy Spirit or recalling Baptism.

SIGN OF THE CROSS & GREETING

Leader: +In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: Let us praise the God of wisdom, knowledge and grace. Blessed be God forever.

All: Blessed be God forever.

Leader: Pope Francis has said often that our Baptism is the best gift we have ever received. Through Baptism, we become a beloved child of God. We become a member of the Church – the People of God. We receive the Holy Spirit in its fullness; the same Spirit that came upon the apostles at Pentecost like a strong driving wind; the Holy Spirit that creates unity in diversity and gives gifts for the life of the world. Like he did on the evening of that first day of the week, Jesus is here among his disciples. He breathes on us the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth that teaches us everything and reminds us of all that Jesus told us.

RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL PROMISES

Leader: As we prepare to listen together to the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit we received in Baptism, let us renew our baptismal faith:

Leader: Do you renounce Satan?

All: I do.

Leader: **And all his works?**

All: I do.

Leader: **And all his empty show?**

All: I do.

Leader: **Do you believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth?**

All: I do.

Leader: **Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered death and was buried,
rose again from the dead
and is seated at the right hand of the Father?**

All: I do.

Leader: **Do you believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting?**

All: I do.

Leader: **This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church.
We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

All: Amen.

BLESSING WITH HOLY WATER (OPTIONAL)

At the conclusion of the Renewal of Baptismal Promises, the ordained minister may sprinkle the assembly with holy water or the faithful may be invited to approach the font (or vessel) and bless themselves with the water. An appropriate song may accompany this ritual, if desired.

COLLECT (OPENING PRAYER)

Leader: **Lord,**
in Baptism you claimed us as your own
and through the Holy Spirit have made us a
communion, a Church, a People of God.
We gather here to listen to your Word and
to one another
so that we may also listen to your Holy Spirit.
Pour out, we pray, upon your people
a spirit of truth, understanding and peace,
that we may strive with all our heart
to know what is pleasing to you
and then pursue it with all our strength.
Give us open hearts and open minds
so that we may hear your Holy Spirit,
and give us the courage to go where
your Spirit leads.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy
Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

• **FIRST SCRIPTURE PROCLAMATION**

Facilitator:

As the Scripture passage is proclaimed, listen for one word or phrase that stands out to you. When a word or phrase in Scripture strikes us, it is often there that the Holy Spirit speaks to us.

Facilitator or another reader:

Proclaim the following scripture passage slowly and deliberately.

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians: (1 COR. 12:12-26)

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," any more than the head can say to the feet, "I do not need you." Even those members of the body which seem less important are in fact indispensable. We honor the members we consider less honorable by clothing them with greater care, thus bestowing on the less presentable a propriety which the more presentable already have.

God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to the lowly members, that there may be no dissension in the body, but that all the members may be concerned for one another. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members share its joy.

- **FIRST SHARING**

Facilitator:

What one word or phrase stood out to you? Please just share that word or phrase with the others in your group. We will not share any more than that for now – just the word or phrase that struck you. Anyone may pass at any time.

Allow 1-2 minutes for the sharing in small groups.

- **SECOND SCRIPTURE PROCLAMATION**

Facilitator:

We are going to listen to the Scripture passage again. Please listen for what stands out, and reflect on what the Holy Spirit might be trying to say to you.

Facilitator or another reader:

Read again the Scripture passage on page 11 of this Facilitator Guide.

- **SECOND SHARING**

Facilitator:

Briefly share with those in your group what you heard in the passage and how the Holy Spirit may be speaking to you. What feelings arise within you? Where do you believe the Holy Spirit is leading? Anyone may choose not to share at any time.

Allow time for sharing in small groups (approximately 5 minutes for a group of 5 or 6 people).

For the remainder of our small group sharing, each small group will need a **note taker** to record the highlights of the sharing that happens in your small group using the Note Taker Form. The goal is not to record verbatim what is said in your group, but rather to capture the spirit of the conversation. Take a moment to identify the note taker for your group and to locate the Note Taker Form provided for you.

Allow a moment for this to happen in each group.

Small group members should also note that in addition to the official Note Taker Form, each small group member may also record comments on the note cards at your table and submit those at the end of the listening session as well.

Each small group will also need a **moderator**. The role of the moderator is to review with their small group the Respectful Communication Guidelines on page 2 of the Participant Guide. Your role will also be to ensure that each person in your group has the opportunity to share if they so desire. Please take a moment now to name your small group moderator and to review the Respectful Communication Guidelines on page 2.

Allow a couple of moments for this to happen.

SMALL GROUP LISTENING & SHARING
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<i>40 minutes</i>

Facilitator:

The following is a passage from an address by Pope Francis for the Opening of the Synod.

Facilitator or another reader:

“Participation is a requirement of the faith received in baptism. As the Apostle Paul says, ‘in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body’. In the Church, everything starts with baptism. Baptism, the source of our life, gives rise to the equal dignity of the children of God, albeit in the diversity of ministries and charisms. Consequently, all the baptized are called to take part in the Church’s life and mission . . . Enabling everyone to participate is an essential ecclesial duty! All the baptized, for baptism is our identity card.”

Allow a moment of silence.

Facilitator:

I invite you now to quietly reflect and then share with your small group on the questions in your Participant Guide on page 6. This is important: the aim is not to address all the questions, but only those that the Holy Spirit leads you to. Take the time you need to read through all of them first and see where you are drawn to share. Trust that the Holy Spirit will be your guide. You will have about 30 minutes for this time of sharing. Please be aware of the time so that everyone has a chance to share.

Allow approximately 30 minutes for this period of sharing in small groups.

1. What is your understanding of journeying together as a People of God, all members of the same Body of Christ?
2. In what ways does our parish look like a group of people journeying together on the same path? How about our diocese? How can we do better?
3. Who are the voices in our community that often get overlooked or remain unheard?
4. What members of the Body of Christ are missing from the Table of the Lord?
5. The Holy Spirit has given gifts to every Baptized person. In what ways are we calling forth the gifts and talents of everyone? How can we do better?

6. The mission of the Church is to bring people to Jesus. How are we called to participate in the mission of the Church?
7. What do you most treasure about our faith and your membership in the Church?
8. What are your dreams for the Church?
9. What breaks your heart?
10. To what is the Holy Spirit calling us as a Church in the 21st century?

BREAK

<i>10 minutes</i>

If desired, allow for a short break here of about 10 minutes before beginning the Large Group Sharing.

LARGE GROUP SHARING

<i>30 minutes</i>

Facilitator:

So that we can all benefit from the sharing that has been happening, I invite a representative from each small group to share briefly with the larger group some of what you've heard tonight / today.

Allow approximately 30 minutes for each group to share some of what was talked about in their small group. If this is a large assembly, it may be necessary to provide a microphone.

CONCLUSION

<i>3 minutes</i>

Facilitator:

I would like to thank you all for being here and for sharing and listening. Please remember that our work isn't finished yet. We need you to return for the second session on **(date and time)**. After you leave here tonight (today), what you have seen and heard will continue to germinate in your mind and heart. The Holy Spirit will continue to

move in you and inspire you and you will continue to ponder. Remember, as a Baptized person, the Holy Spirit speaks through you. Consider diving deeper into the concept of synodality through the resources provided on the diocesan website. Bring back your reflections for the second session. We need your voice.

We also need you to be the voice of those who are not represented here – the people who live on the margins of our Church. You’ll find on page 8 of your Participant Guide a tool that can be used in having a conversation with someone on the periphery. Pope Francis speaks clearly to us that we must go to them since they are not likely to come to us. They also have a voice that we need to hear. By making the effort to have a conversation with them, you can bring their voice to the rest of us.

I would ask all note takers to hand their sheets to me after our closing prayer. You are also welcome to hand in individual comments either to me on the note cards or through the diocesan website. At the conclusion of all of our listening at our parish, the recorded comments from the groups will be submitted to the Diocese of Owensboro and incorporated by Bishop Medley into a report to be used in the next phase of listening on the continental level.

CLOSING PRAYER	<i>5 minutes</i>
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Facilitator, Priest, or someone else leads the closing prayer.

Leader: **Together, now, let’s close our time of prayer and sharing with the prayer on page 7 of your Participant Guide.**

Leader: **As we await with longing the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us seek his mercy and pray for all those in need:**

Minister: For the Church, gathered in Synod: that by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit this journey will be marked by humble listening, courageous speech, and lively hope. Let us pray to the Lord: R.\

All: R.\ Lord, hear our prayer.

For ourselves, gathered here and for the People of God in the Diocese of Owensboro: That this Synodal Process may lead us ever deeper into the communion of the Church, foster our participation in it, and equip us to go out on mission. Let us pray to the Lord: R.

For all civil and public authorities: That they may always seek the common good, acting with justice and integrity. Let us pray to the Lord: R.

For the sick, the lonely, the oppressed, and the suffering, especially in this time of pandemic: That they may never be discarded, but rather treasured and cared for as the face of Christ in a suffering world. Let us pray to the Lord: R.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Leader: We are made one in our baptism. And so we pray with one voice as Jesus taught us:

All: Our Father....

CONCLUDING RITE

While making the sign of the cross on themselves:

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.

Leader: Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord. [OR Go in peace.]

All: Thanks be to God.

Dear Facilitator:

*Please collect the **Note Taker Forms** and **note cards** from each small group and submit them along with a copy of the **sign-in sheet** to the Diocese of Owensboro by one of these means:*

- *Take a picture of each and email to synod@pastoral.org*
- *Submit information via the online portal at <https://owensborodiocese.org/synod> or in Spanish at <https://owensborodiocese.org/sinodo/>*
- *Submit by mail to:*

Synod on Synodality
McRaith Catholic Center
600 Locust Street
Owensboro, KY 42301

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