



Parent's Guide to Listening Sessions for the Family

Before the Family Listening Session:

- Choose a time conducive for the entire family to be present, mealtimes, after Mass, before a family game night, etc.
- Eliminate possible distractions, such as TV, cell phones, tablets, computers, etc.
- Make the time special by gathering around a crucifix, lighting a candle, etc.
- For younger children, have a special speaking "mic" (i.e. a toy, stuffed animal, soft ball, etc.) that a person must be holding in order to speak.
- Do not get caught up in doing the process perfectly, adapt it to your family needs, but try to make it a prayerful experience adapted to your children's age, mental capacity, and needs.
- Give each member of the family equal ability to speak and be heard. No one person should dominate the conversation (including parents).
- Assign each family member a specific task or role during the listening session, if possible.
- Avoid teaching or correcting information during this time and use the time as a way to gain understanding and insight into each other's perspectives. Everyone should feel understood during and after the listening session and clarifying questions (for the sake of understanding) are encouraged.
- For children age 4-8, keep sessions limited to 15-20 minutes.
- For children age 8+, sessions may be 30-60 minutes depending on interest and engagement.

Opening Prayer

Ask if anyone would like to open with a heart prayer. You may also collectively say the prayer being used during the Synod on Synodality below:

*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 of 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 Hymn

Choose a favorite family hymn and sing a verse or two. If your family does not agree on a favorite hymn, you may use one of the hymns below:

Be Thou My Vision

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art
Thou my best thought, by day or by night
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord
Thou my great Father, and I thy true son
Thou in me dwelling and I with thee one

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise
Thou mine inheritance, now and always
Thou and thou only first in my heart
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art

High King of heaven, my victory won
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright
heaven's sun

Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my vision, O ruler of all
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my vision, O ruler of all

Come Thou Fount

*Come Thou fount of every blessing
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace
Streams of mercy, never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise*

*Teach me some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above
Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it
Mount of Thy redeeming love*

*Here I raise my Ebenezer
Here by Thy great help I've come
And I hope by Thy good pleasure
Safely to arrive at home*

*Jesus sought me when a stranger
Wandering from the throne of God
He to rescue me from danger
Interposed His precious blood*

*Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be
Let that grace now, like a fetter
Bind my wandering heart to Thee*

*Prone to wander, Lord I feel it
Prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it
Seal it for Thy courts above*

*Come Thou fount of every blessing
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace
Streams of mercy, never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise*

*Teach me some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above*

*Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it
Mount of Thy unchanging love*

Why Listening Sessions?

Read aloud: Pope Francis has called for *all the baptized* to participate in reflecting on how the Holy Spirit is inviting us to “journey together” as we work toward communion that we hope for as we make our way toward heaven. Pope Francis describes this in three words: communion, participation, and mission. Perhaps, we can understand this as genuine connection, active engagement, and effective presence in the world. Our local Church and Pope Francis wants to hear from all of our voices, especially the voices of the little ones and those who are not often heard. That’s where you come in!

Listening Guidelines

Read aloud:

- Appoint a “chairperson” to lead the meeting (younger kids like to be given the ability to lead).
- The chairperson’s job is to make sure that everyone has a chance to be heard and to encourage others to avoid speaking over other family members (the speaking “mic” is useful here).
- No teaching or correcting information or beliefs (this should be reserved for another time). Differences of opinion can be shared, but the goal should not be to convince another family member.
- Allow each person to finish their statement before commenting or clarifying.
- Avoid dominating the conversation or speaking for longer than other family members.

Questions for Reflection [This section needs to be improved for kid friendliness.]

Have a family member read the scripture passage. Read the short description and reflection questions. Take a few moments to reflect. Spend a few minutes sharing your individual responses. Have a parent record the family members collective responses to each question on the space provided.

Companions on the Journey

1 Cor. 12:12-20

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.

As a baptized people, we are a communion, all members of the same Body of Christ. Together we are on a journey. No one is called to walk alone.

- In what ways do our parish and diocese look like a group of people journeying together on the same path?
- How do we support and encourage others who are experiencing challenges?
- Who in our community is isolated, weary or lost? How can we better accompany them?

Listening

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold you will conceive in our womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. But Mary said the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren, for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Listening is an important first step in being a people walking together. Mary opened her heart to listen to the words of the angel Gabriel, even though the message seemed impossible, trusting that with God all things are possible.

- What are our challenges when it comes to good efforts at listening?

- Who are the voices in our community that often get overlooked or remain unheard?
- What space exists in our local Church and community for all to share their ideas, concerns, joys and sorrows?

Celebrating

Luke 24:30-32

And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?"

As Catholics, the most important way we come together is in the celebration of the Mass. We come as the one Body of Christ to worship our God and to receive Jesus in the Eucharist.

- How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the Mass?
- What members of the Body of Christ are missing from the Table of the Lord?
- How do the Sacraments nurture us as we walk together as Church?

Sharing Responsibility for Our Common Mission

Matthew 28:18-20

Then Jesus approached and said to them. "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy

Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

As baptized people, Jesus has given us the great commission: to go and make disciples of all the nations, sharing with them the Good News of Jesus Christ. This is the mission of the Church. The Church exists in order to evangelize.

- What are simple ways we can make Jesus Christ known to the people in our lives?
- How can we spread the Good News in society? In our places of work and play? In our families?
- What areas of mission might we be neglecting? What is a need of which our Church appears to be unaware?

Closing Prayer

Ask if anyone would like to say a prayer of thanksgiving for the blessings of the listening session as well as any intentions of the family members followed by “We pray to the Lord”. Ask for the intercession of any patron saints of your family.

Alternatively, you may pray the following:

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.*

*Lord,
by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit
help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*



Diocese of
OWENSBORO