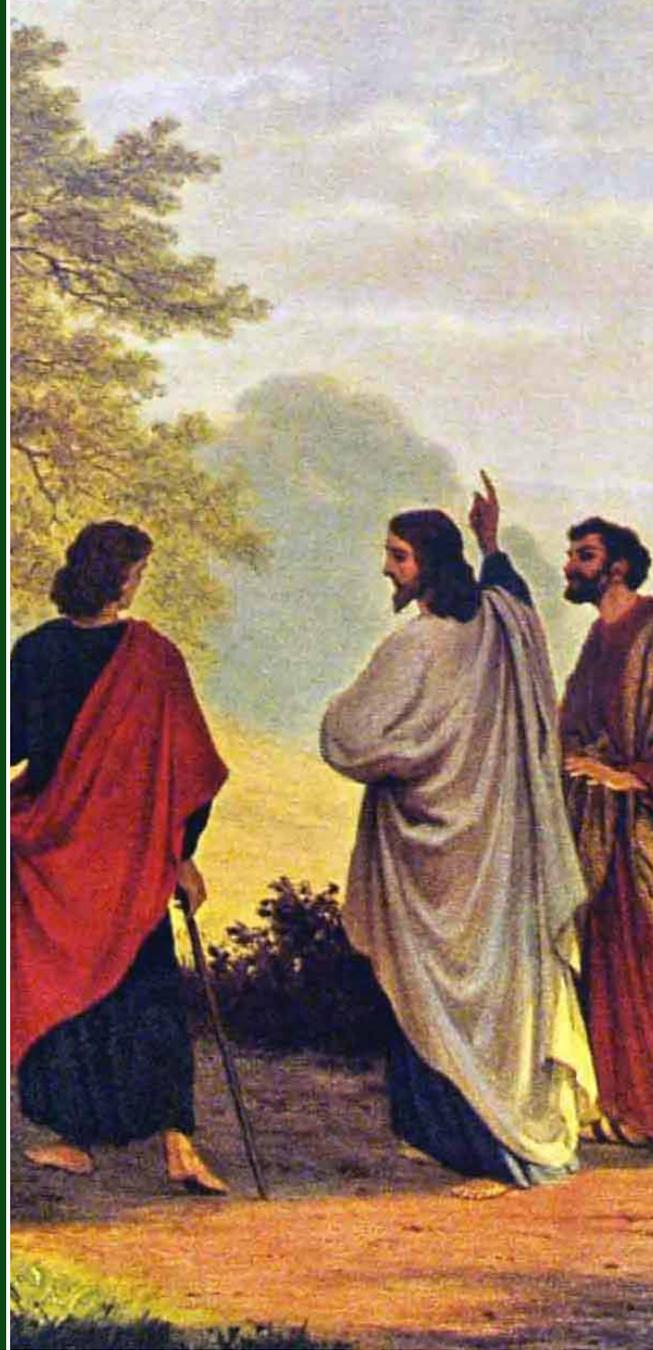


Listen.
Escucha.
Escuta.
Makinig.
Nghe.
Ecoutez.
Słuchać.
Ascolta.
Audi.
Hören.
The Church is listening.



SYNOD LISTENING SESSION GUIDE

DIOCESE OF ALLENTOWN

STEP 1 - LISTENING SESSION TIPS AND REMINDERS

Listen - Avoid Teaching and Preaching

The facilitator's role is to lead discussions among the members. Do not share your opinion or sway the group toward any particular viewpoint. Help the group maintain focus and keep the session moving.

Begin and End on Time

Be respectful of group members' time. Have a timekeeper and maintain focus and keep the session moving.

Take Notes

A reliable person should be designated to record basic comments shared by the participants. These points will be summarized and then be part of the local report that is to be submitted for evaluation on the diocesan level.

Review the ground rules with session participants:

- Remind members to keep confidential anything that was shared in the group.
- Show respect for one another (no criticism or judgment).
- Be courteous; only one person may talk at a time.
- No one is required to talk, but participation is encouraged.
- Be brief in responses and allow ample time for everyone to share.
- Purpose of the synod is not to debate, but to listen. Be positive and constructive.

If the group cannot get started, consider:

- Rephrase the question or go around the group and ask if anyone has a response.
- Go back to your basic questions: What do you think?
- Skip whatever is halting the discussion and move on.

Quick Tips

If someone dominates the discussion:

Learn the art of interruption: *"Excuse me, before you continue may I ask if anyone has a comment?"*

If the group strays off the topic:

"This is an important topic, but we don't have time to talk about it here."

The discussion becomes too heated:

Remind participants that the purpose of the synod is not to debate, but to listen. Be positive and constructive.



Prayer for the Synod

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.

STEP 3 - REVIEW GROUND RULES.

"THE GOAL IS TO LISTEN to all Catholics so that we may discern the best ways of addressing the challenges we face as a world and walk together on a path of healing and unity through our Catholic faith."

BISHOP ALFRED A. SCHLERT

Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church in which all members are called to participate. Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without judgment.

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

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STEP 4 - ASK QUESTIONS AND LISTEN.

PARTICIPATION IN LIFE OF THE CHURCH

- Describe ways that you learned about being Catholic. (eg. Raised Catholic, went to Catholic school, RCIA/Convert, married a Catholic)
- How would you describe your relationship with the Catholic Church today? Has it changed over time? How? Would you call it fulfilling? Why or why not?
- Does your parish offer a spirit of welcome and inclusion to all in the community?
- Does prayer, Mass, the Sacraments, and other Church celebrations inspire and guide your life with the Church? Why or why not?
- Does your participation in your parish help to inspire important decisions in our life? Why or why not?
- What joy does the Church bring you now or in the past?
- What do you think is the mission of the Church? What areas of mission is the Church fulfilling? What areas need more attention? What areas are being neglected?

DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

- When you reflect on your parish community, is there diversity in dialogue that is representative of a wider community? Why or why not?
- Do you believe the Catholic church listens to the whole People of God? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What issues in the Church and community should be highlighted?
- What dialogue and collaboration does the Church have with believers of other religions and with those without religious affiliation?
- Do you feel there is space in your parish for the voice of all people, including those both active and inactive in their faith?
- Are you aware of tools and procedures that the Church uses to promote transparency and accountability?

CATHOLIC IDENTITY AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- How would you describe your relationship with God? Would you call it fulfilling? Why or why not?
- How do you think people can grow in their faith? What resources (books, clergy, retreats, services, etc.) are helpful to you?

JOURNEYING TOGETHER AS A CATHOLIC, FAITH-FILLED COMMUNITY

- Where do you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit? What are we being asked to do?
- How can a church community help form people to be more capable of walking together, listening to one another, fulfilling the mission, etc.?
- How do you think the Holy Spirit is inviting the Church community – both locally and universally – to grow together?



STEP 5 - RECORD THE COMMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

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