



## Beyond the Consultation Phase

The synodal journey does not conclude when the results of your local consultation are submitted to your diocese/eparchy or the USCCB. Rather, the conversations that took place should be the first step in an ongoing effort to strengthen the relationship between the Church and the People of God.

Pope Francis has spoken of “the need for a mystagogical renewal” for Catholics that includes “a broader growth process and the integration of every dimension of the person within a communal journey of hearing and response” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 166). In other words, *mystagogy*, which is an unpacking of the mysteries after the celebration of the Sacraments, can be applied to all experiences in the Church, including the synodal process. Just as the physical reception of a Sacrament does not end a person’s initiation into the grace they provide, the synodal journey does not end with the conclusion of a formal or informal consultation. In fact, it is only the beginning.

Prior to engaging in the synodal process, plans should be made for how facilitators and pastoral leaders will keep in touch following a formal or informal dialogue experience. Suggestions for continuing the journey can include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Get contact information** of those who partake in the dialogue or consultation sessions.
- **Follow-up with emails, phone calls, or letters** to those people, thanking them for

their participation and sharing any further information.

- **Stay in touch with conversation participants**, to get to know them better and to extend the Church’s support for the realities of their lives.
- **Pray for the participants by name** (and for their intentions, if they have shared those with you), and regularly share with them that the Church has been praying for them (and their intentions).
- **Share regular communications about the synodal process** (and to prepare for this, keep informed through your diocesan or the national Synod teams, and by following news about the Synod through the Vatican Synod website, [www.synod.va](http://www.synod.va)).
- **Bring synodal ideas from consultations to decision-making entities** (i.e., pastoral or finance councils, staff, pastors, bishops, parish or diocesan offices, etc.) for serious consideration and discernment.
- **Keep past participants regularly informed** about any local progress on any suggestions and ideas that emerged and were brought forth to decision-making entities (as noted above).
- **Incorporate consultations and/or listening sessions into your everyday ministry.** Becoming a synodal Church requires the practice of synodality at every opportunity.

In the end, the goal of this synodal process is to see what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church. Walking the synodal path brings us towards deeper communion, greater participation, and more robust missionary spirit. The Synod is an invitation for the Church at all levels to be formed in a spirit of synodality, to grow and learn as the People of God, and in so doing, become the “pilgrim Church” it is meant to be.



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