



## Infusing a Synodal Spirit: Prayerfully Trusting the Holy Spirit

Throughout this journey, a *synodal spirit* should infuse all aspects of the life of our faith communities. The synodal process should not just be the act of consultation nor should it be a process to help you develop a report. The experience of journeying together is formative; people will begin to see how synodality can be lived out in any setting: within the Church (on the local or global level), in relation to other faith traditions, and as people of faith and engaged citizens within society.

The journey of walking the synodal path must always be rooted in prayer. Synodality has much to offer the Church and the world. Spirituality and prayer must permeate all dimensions of synodal preparation and experiences. Every encounter, every development, and every component of this Synod journey should include intentional and meaningful prayer and silence.

Because we must be open to what ultimately emerges from this synodal process, we must put our trust in the Holy Spirit. We can take to heart God's words to Jeremiah: "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you... plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope" (Jer 29:11). Walking the synodal path will require great trust in God and developing deeper trust with one another.

The Church has invited all participants to invoke the Holy Spirit when they engage in synodal activity by using the prayer, [\*Adsumus Sancte Spiritus\*](#) (adapted from the prayer which also opened each session of the Second Vatican Council):

**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.

The regular exercise of sacred silence is complementary to a spirit of prayer. Pope Francis reminds us that "trust-filled prayer is a response of a heart open to encountering God face to face, where all is peaceful, and the quiet voice of the Lord can be heard in the midst of silence. In that silence, we can discern, in the light of the Spirit, the paths of holiness to which the Lord is calling us" ([\*Gaudete et Exsultate\*](#) 149-150).

Silence is an essential part of the synodal journey; it allows God to speak to our hearts and it prepares us to listen more deeply to the Lord's will in our prayer, as well as in our dialogue with others. Silence predisposes us to hear more clearly as we listen to the wisdom of others, especially when another's words may challenge or unsettle us. The art of silence is a powerful tool when engaging with and through an age that often fills empty spaces with noise. Silence is also a way to practice trust in God and in other people.

**Creatively and intentionally integrate prayer, silence, and trust-building** into all the synodal processes within your community. Be sure to open and close every element of the journey with

prayerfulness, making use of the [Adsumus Sancte Spiritus](#) prayer when appropriate.

**Synodality is essential to the very fabric of all ecclesial structures.** The diocesan phase is a time to consider how synodality is implemented in your context. From parish and diocesan staffs to various councils and committees within a Catholic community (pastoral councils, finance councils, school boards, liturgy committees, ministry leadership, advisory groups, etc.), synodality is an ecclesial muscle to exercise. Consultations around Synod 2021-2023 and the insights shared by participants are an excellent starting point for leaders of these structures. The feedback shared can assist leaders to be more synodal in the way issues are raised, conversations and consultations ensue, and decisions are ultimately made.

**All communities, components, and efforts of the Catholic Church, are invited, in a *spirit of synodality*, to consider the following questions:**

- How is the Holy Spirit fully present within consultations and dialogues?
- Who is missing around our table? (e.g young people, families, migrants and refugees, the poor, etc.) Why are they not present? How can they be included now and in the future?
- Who are the people on the peripheries of our community that need to be invited?
- How do we recognize, appreciate, call forth, and use the gifts that the Spirit has bestowed on individuals within our community for the good of the Church and society?
- How are all God's people involved in exercising responsibility in the Church? In the proclamation of the Gospel? In the building up of a more just world? In the decision-making that guides the community? In the work of the Church in the world?
- What can we do to share responsibility and power in our structures?
- How can we better bring to light and convert prejudices or distorted practices in our efforts which are not rooted in the Gospel?
- How can we become more credible and reliable as a partner in the paths of social dialogue, healing, truth-telling, reconciliation, transparency, inclusion, and participation in the community?

- What relationships need to be regenerated within and beyond ourselves, and how can begin establishing better and more fruitful relationships going forward?
- Are there other groups, communities, or individuals, including those outside the Church, with whom we should be more intentionally collaborating and working together?
- How do we allow room for prayer and silence - so that we can constantly prepare ourselves spiritually for to trust in God and one another a little bit more?

It is crucial, in each area of the life of a community, to cultivate a spirit of synodality. These questions are starting points as each committee, council, ministry, organization, and entity within our Catholic communities examines itself and affirms the good and reimagines what could be better.

Infusing a *synodal spirit* into all we do is part of the renewal at every level of the Church sought by Synod 2021-2023. Once the formal or official consultation is completed, the insights from those conversations can further guide and shape the way each Catholic community lives out its mission. Consultation and dialogue should be incorporated as part of future discernment processes. Synod organizers will want to make sure the results of the synodal process are readily available for leaders across their respective community, whether that be a diocese or eparchy, national organization, parish, mission, academic institution, apostolate, ecclesial movement, specific pastoral ministry, or in any setting the synodal consultations are taking place.

Copyright © 2022, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. All rights reserved. This text may be reproduced in whole or in part without alteration for nonprofit educational use, provided such reprints are not sold and include this notice.

Quotes from *Gaudete et Exsultate* copyright © 2018, Libreria Editrice Vaticana (LEV), Vatican City State. Used with permission. All rights reserved.