

connection with the initiatives of the diocesan Bishop and the Diocesan Contact Person(s) that are designated for this Synodal Process. It is worth noting that the consultation undertaken by the diocesan phase of the Synodal Process is coordinated by the diocesan Bishop and addressed “to the priests, deacons and lay faithful of their [local] Churches, both individually and in associations, without overlooking the valuable contribution that consecrated men and women can offer” (EC, 7).

The *Preparatory Document* tells us that in the ministry of Jesus, “The election of the apostles is not the privilege of an exclusive position of power and separation but the grace of an inclusive ministry of blessing and fellowship. Thanks to the gift of the Spirit of the Risen Lord, they are to guard the place of Jesus, without replacing him: not to put filters on his presence, but to make it easy to encounter him” (PD, 19). So too all the clergy, endowed with the sacred gifts and charisms received through their ordination, have a critical role to play in ensuring that this synodal experience is an authentic encounter with the Risen Christ, grounded in prayer, nourished by the celebration of the Eucharist, and inspired by listening to the Word of God.

4.4 The Roadmap (Sample Steps for the Diocesan Phase)

The tasks involved in carrying out the listening and dialogue phase within each diocese will vary depending on local factors, but the general approach will involve the following steps:

1. Appointing the Diocesan Contact Person(s)

Each diocese should select one or two individuals to serve as the Diocesan Contact Person(s). Appendix A provides details of the responsibilities and desired qualities of these contact persons. Ideally, two co-leaders are appointed as a model of co-responsibility. If there is more than one diocesan contact person, it is recommended that at least one woman and one man be appointed. These may be voluntary or remunerated positions, and might be undertaken by person(s) already working within the diocese. Diocesan Contact Persons can be priests, religious, or lay people. Dioceses can reflect on the possible role of the Diocesan Contact Person(s) in continuing to serve the path of synodality in the diocese up to October 2023 and beyond.

2. Setting up a diocesan synodal team

The Diocesan Contact Person(s) will likely need to work with the collaboration of a core team, which can either be assembled through an open process of people expressing their interest, or by appointment of the diocesan Bishop. Members of the diocesan synodal team are likely to comprise representatives from parishes, movements, diocesan ministries, and religious

communities. They can be convened as an advisory and working body for the Diocesan Contact Person(s). Beyond the diocesan phase of the current Synod, the diocesan synodal team can continue to promote and implement the path of synodality in the diocese into the future, in conjunction with the diocesan Bishop.

3. Discerning the path for your diocese

The *Preparatory Document* and *Vademecum* provide information about the current Synod and offer guidelines for organizing the consultation process. These documents are to be applied differently in diverse contexts, depending on the current realities and challenges in the local Church and in society, as well as any concurrent or recent synodal processes occurring in the diocese. A prayerful reflection can be made with these documents to discern the key areas of focus for the diocese.

4. Planning the participatory process

Each diocese should aim for the widest participation possible, involving a variety of platforms. These could include parish-level meetings, inter-parish gatherings, school-based groups, local associations, online platforms, special language groupings, and suitable means of reaching those who have been distant from the Church. Ideally, there would be opportunities for diverse groups to listen to one another. Resources needed for the consultation process should be identified and made available, including an overall budget, physical facilities, and online platforms. Solidarity can be organized between dioceses to provide financial assistance and human resources as needed.

5. Preparing group coordinators for the synodal consultation meetings

The diocesan synodal team can work through coordinators to carry out the synodal consultation meeting across the diocese. For example, the synodal consultation within a parish can be overseen by a coordinator in that parish, working with a parish team. All coordinators will need to be briefed on the spirit, objectives, and attitudes of the Synodal Process, and should have access to relevant resources including this *Vademecum* and the Synod website. The coordinators can then discern and plan the most appropriate processes for their particular groups, in communication with the diocesan synodal team.

6. Providing an orientation workshop for the diocesan synodal team and local coordinators

Since the level of understanding and experience regarding synodality likely differs across the diocese, formation workshops can be provided to give people an orientation about synodality and equip them with basic skills for synodal processes. Such skills would include carrying out synodal consultation meetings, and this basic formation is in itself a valuable outcome of the current

Synodal Process. Appendix B provides an outline of how a typical synodal consultation meeting can be conducted. What is most crucial is adopting suitable methods that facilitate attentive listening, genuine sharing, and a communal spiritual discernment. Further resources are available on the Synod website.

7. Communicating to everyone

To raise awareness and encourage participation, wide publicity about the Synod can be carried out to communicate the significance and objectives of the Synod and how people can participate. Some examples of publicity materials are provided on the website.

8. Implementing, monitoring, and guiding the synodal consultation process

Once ready, the synodal consultation process begins. The heart of this stage is the synodal consultation meetings that happen across the diocese. A diocesan liturgical celebration can be organized to open the diocesan phase and invoke the Holy Spirit to guide the whole process. Throughout the diocesan phase, the Diocesan Contact Person(s) should keep in regular contact with group coordinators of the synodal consultation meetings across the dioceses so as to monitor progress, provide support where needed, and facilitate the exchange of ideas, best practices, and emerging feedback. A date should be specified for the submission of the consultation feedback, which can follow the guidelines for the diocesan synthesis as described below.

9. Diocesan Pre-Synodal Meeting

It is strongly recommended that the consultation process in the diocese culminate in a Diocesan Pre-Synodal Meeting that includes a liturgical celebration. A wide representation from across the diocese should be invited to take part with the aim of coming together to pray, listen, reflect, and discern the synodal path along which God's Spirit is calling the whole diocese. Appendix C provides suggestions for organizing this meeting.

10. Preparing and submitting the diocesan synthesis

Finally, a diocesan synthesis should be prepared based on all the collated feedback from across the diocese as well as the proceedings of the Pre-Synodal Meeting. Appendix D provides a suggested outline. This is to be submitted to the episcopal conference by a specified date. Once finalized, the synthesis should be communicated to the public in the diocese. The Diocesan Contact Person(s) should maintain their appointment throughout the Synod process at least until the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023, and their role can continue beyond this date. In the successive phases of the present Synod, they will be a liaison point for the episcopal conferences and continental gatherings, and can help the diocese remain

engaged in the Synodal Process. Where needed, they can also ensure a smooth transition towards the implementation of any suggestions raised during the consultation in the diocese. After all, this Synodal Process is not the end but a new beginning.



4.5 The Basic Ingredients of the Synodal Experience

The steps listed above in Part 4.4 are to be used as guidelines. Ultimately, the diocesan phase involves similar “ingredients” as the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, such as the one that will occur in Rome in October 2023. These elements are: a liturgical celebration to begin, gathering in a large assembly, small group meetings, moments of silence and prayer, informal conversations, shared experiences (such as pilgrimages, artistic expressions, and experiences with those who are vulnerable, handicapped persons, and the elderly), and a liturgical celebration to conclude. These basic ingredients of synodality can be easily adapted to your local circumstance to foster a fruitful synodal experience in your local Church, keeping in mind the principles, attitudes, and pitfalls outlined above in Part 2.

