

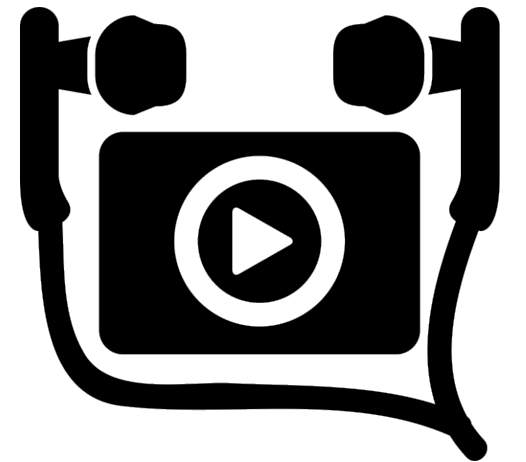


SYNOD 2021 – 2023

AN ORIENTATION



MOULD US LORD



Synod Prayer

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.



Introducing The Synod Team

Diocesan Contact Persons:	
Co-chairs:	Ruby Alleyne Gregory Mc Guire
Team Members:	Fr Urban Hudlin OP; Renee Smith; Margaret Richardson; Hanif Benjamin; Ronald Tagallie; Dennis Hamid
Secretariat:	Sharon Delochan (Secretary); Candice Clarke-Salloum (Coordinator)

Session Aim and Outcomes

To provide an overview of the local process and prepare coordinators for their role in planning, organising and facilitating synodal consultations and conversations during the period January to March 2022.

At the end of the session participants should be able to:

- Share the meaning of Synod and Synodality and the purpose of Synod 2021 – 2023 with others
- Explain, in general terms, the process which will be followed during the Synod process in the Archdiocese of Port-of-Spain
- Arrive at a clear understanding of the role of Synod coordinators in the process.

Programme

- Let's Talk Synod!
- The Synod Logo
- The Purpose of the Synodal Conversations
- Understanding the Synod Theme
- The Synod Process Explained
- Discernment and Listening in the Synodal Process
- Key Steps and Guiding Principles
- Roles and Responsibilities of Coordinators
- The Synod Questions and Conversations
- Synod Team and Synod Coordinators Meet and Greet
- Next Steps

Let's Talk Synod!

On October 10, 2021, Pope Francis formally opened a two-year process called “a **synod** on **synodality**,” under the theme “**For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.**”

Bishops all around the world will consult with **everyone** before coming together for a discussion in Rome in 2023.



What is the focus of this consultation?

“How can the church learn to rely more fully on this kind of consultation-and-discussion (conversation) process to make decisions affecting all of us? How can the church be more open and inclusive of all members.”

Synod on Synodality?



The word ‘**Synod**’ is derived from an ancient Greek term which means “**coming together**” or “**travelling together**”.

Ancient Christians developed a custom of leaders coming together to pray and make decisions about matters affecting the Christian communities.

They gathered in the faith that their prayers and discussions would reveal God’s will and the way to achieve it. These gatherings became known as “synods”.

The year 2015 marked the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops established during Vatican II.



A Church which listens

Pope Francis has shown a special interest in the Synod of Bishops since his papacy began in 2013.

“For the disciples of Jesus, yesterday, today and always, the only authority is the authority of service, the only power is the power of the cross.”

A synodal church (journeying/walking together) is a listening church.

<https://theconversation.com/what-is-the-synod-of-bishops-a-catholic-priest-and-theologian-explains-168937>

Accessed 11/11/2021 at 1.00 pm

www.synod.va

THE SYNOD LOGO



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Listening to the Logo

- A large, majestic tree, full of wisdom and light, reaches for the sky. A sign of deep vitality and hope which expresses the cross of Christ.
- It carries the Eucharist, which shines like the sun.
- The horizontal branches, opened like hands or wings, suggest, at the same time, the Holy Spirit.
- The people of God are not static: they are on the move, "walking together". The people are united by the same common dynamic that this Tree of Life breathes into them, from which they begin their walk.
- These 15 silhouettes sum up our entire humanity in its diversity of life situations of generations and origins. This aspect is reinforced by the multiplicity of bright colours which are themselves signs of joy.



Listening to the Logo

- There is no hierarchy between these people who are all on the same footing: young, old, men, women, teenagers, children, lay people, religious, parents, couples, singles; the bishop and the nun are not in front of them, but among them. Quite naturally, children and then adolescents open their walk, in reference to these words of Jesus in the Gospel: " I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children". (Mt 11:25)
- The horizontal baseline: "For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission" runs from left to right in the direction of this march, underlining and strengthening it, to end with the title "Synod 2021 - 2023", the high point that synthesizes the whole.



The Purpose of the Synodal Consultations/Conversations

- This synodal journey is a special time of prayer, listening, dialogue, and recommendations.
- This is your opportunity to respond to the request from Pope Francis to dream about the Church we are called to be.
- By gathering as a people of faith, we hope to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, to warm hearts, and to restore strength for our common mission.
- By the end of our time together we aim to capture your answers to the basic question: What is the Holy Spirit saying to our Church today?

The COVID-19 Pandemic

We find ourselves at a crucial moment in the life of the Church and the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has made existing inequalities explode.

At the same time, **this global crisis has revived our sense that we are all in the same boat, and that “one person’s problems are the problems of all.”**

The context of the COVID-19 pandemic will surely affect the unfolding of the Synodal Process. This **global pandemic** creates real logistical challenges, but also **offers an opportunity to promote the revitalization of the Church at a critical time in human history, when many local Churches are facing various questions about the path forward.**

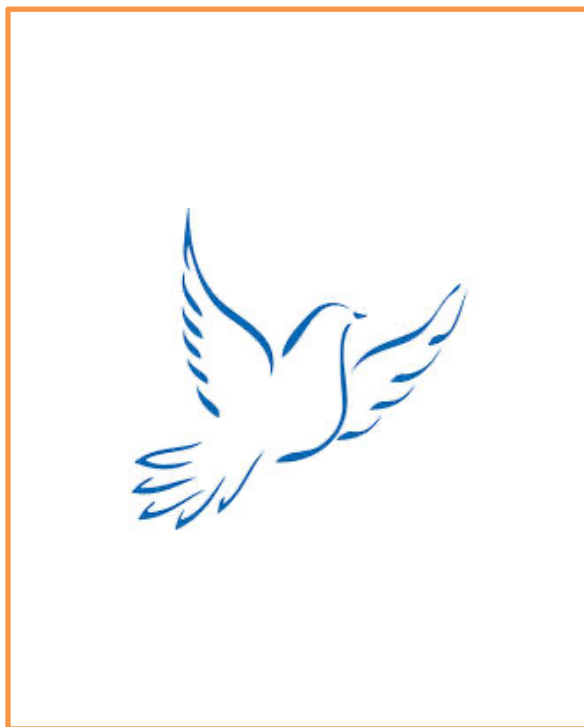


Renewal and Revitalization

Synodality represents the path by which the Church can be **renewed by the action of the Holy Spirit, listening together to what God has to say to his people.**



However, this journey together not only unites us more deeply with one another as the People of God, it also **sends us out to pursue our mission as a prophetic witness that embraces the entire family of humanity, together with our fellow Christian denominations and other faith traditions.**



Renewal and Revitalization

A Reading from Holy Scripture and Reflection

Acts 2: 1-11 and 14-19

Understanding the Synod Theme

“For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission”

The practice of living as a synodal Church means:

Communion

The conversations lead to conversion to Christ and commitment to active participation in the mission given by Christ.

Participation

The people of God talk with one another and listen to one another about questions that matter

Mission

The communion exists for a common purpose; mission flows naturally from the experience of communion

Understanding the Synod Theme

“For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission”

Communion:

The communion we share, as diverse peoples of one faith, finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity. It is Christ who reconciles us to the Father and unites us with each other in the Holy Spirit.

We all have a role to play in discerning and living out God’s call for his people.

Understanding the Synod Theme

“For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission”

Participation:

A call for the involvement of all who belong to the People of God – laity, consecrated and ordained – to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another.

This listening creates space for us to hear the Holy Spirit together, and guides our aspirations for the Church of the Third Millennium.

In a synodal Church the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God’s will.

Genuine efforts must be made to ensure the inclusion of those at the margins or who feel excluded.

Understanding the Synod Theme

“For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission”

Mission:

The Church exists to evangelize. We can never be centred on ourselves. Our mission is to witness to the love of God in the midst of the whole human family.

This Synodal Process has a deeply missionary dimension to it. It is intended to enable the Church to better witness to the Gospel, especially with those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential peripheries of our world.

The Synod Process

The Synodal Process is first and foremost a spiritual process.

It is not a mechanical data-gathering exercise or a series of meetings and debates.

The Synodal Process must involve:

- Discernment through listening, to create space for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Accessibility, in order to ensure that as many people as possible can participate, regardless of location, language, education, socio-economic status, ability/disability, and material resources.

The Synod Process

- ❖ **Cultural awareness** to celebrate and embrace the diversity within local communities.
- ❖ **Inclusion**, making every effort to involve those who feel excluded or marginalized.
- ❖ **Partnership** based on the model of a co-responsible Church.
- ❖ **Respect** for the rights, dignity, and opinion of each participant.

The Synod Process

Accurate syntheses that truly captures the range of critical and appreciative perspectives of all responses, including views that are expressed only by a minority of participants.

Transparency, ensuring that processes of invitation, involvement, inclusion, and aggregation of input are clear and well communicated.

Fairness, ensuring that participation in the listening process treats each person equally, so that every voice can be duly heard.

Inclusion and Participation

While all the baptized are specifically called to take part in the Synodal Process, no one – no matter their religious affiliation – should be excluded from sharing their perspective and experiences, insofar as they want to help the Church on her synodal journey of seeking what is good and true.

We must seek out maximum inclusion and participation, reaching out to involve the greatest number of people possible, and especially those on the periphery who are often excluded and forgotten.

Special care should be taken to involve those persons who may risk being excluded: women, the handicapped, refugees, migrants, the elderly, people who live in poverty, Catholics who rarely or never practice their faith, etc.

Creative means should also be found in order to involve children and youth.

Let's take a break!



Discernment in the Synodal process

Video Reflection by Fr Urban Hudlin



Discernment

The Synodal Process requires us to learn and exercise the art of personal and communal discernment.

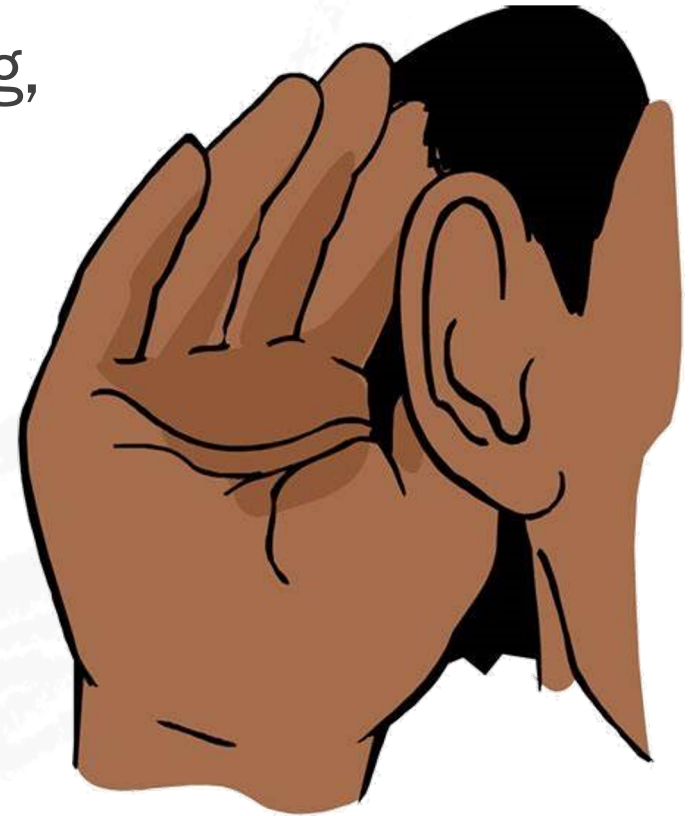
This kind of discernment is not only a one-time exercise, but ultimately a way of life, grounded in Christ, following the lead of the Holy Spirit, living for the greater glory of God.

Discernment is a grace from God, but it requires our human involvement in simple ways: praying, reflecting, paying attention to one's inner disposition, listening and talking to one another in an authentic, meaningful, and welcoming way.

Discernment involves reflection and engages both the heart and head in making decisions in our concrete lives to seek and find the will of God.

Discernment

In order to participate fully in the act of discerning, **it is important for the baptised to hear the voices of other people in their local context**, including people who have left the practice of the faith, people of other faith traditions, people of no religious belief.



The Listening Exercise

The objective of the current Synod is to **listen, as the entire People of God, to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church.**

The purpose of this Synod is not to produce more documents. Rather, it is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission.

Listening Skills

- Attending
- Silence
- Paraphrasing
- Summarising
- Questioning
- Empathy

What have we all been asked to do?

There are 7 Key Steps in the local process:

1. Communicate with every parish, religious order, community, movement etc. within the church, Catholics on the periphery, special interest groups and non-Catholics who wish to join in the conversation and explain the process and the objective (November). **Synod Team**
2. Official Launch of the Synod (November). **Archbishop, Clergy, Religious; Synod Team; Parish/Cluster/Commission/Community Synod Coordinators**
3. Promote the upcoming Synod Conversations at the National Level to raise awareness and encourage participation (November and ongoing). **Synod Team**
4. Select and prepare coordinators for the conversations among persons in those groups (December - January). **Synod Team with Archdiocesan support**

What have we all been asked to do?

There are 7 Key Steps in the local process:

5. Promote the Synod Conversations at the Parish/Community Level (December and ongoing). **Parish Priests; Parish/Commission/Community Groups & Coordinators**
6. Organise conversations, LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN and prepare and submit reports (January – March 2022). **Synod Coordinators**
7. Synthesise the reports and prepare one Archdiocesan report. **Synod Team**

Paper-based and online questionnaires can also be used strategically to reach out to as many persons as possible during the listening phase.

What are the Guiding Principles of the Synodal Process?

1. Synods are a time to dream and “spend time with the future”: We are encouraged to create a local process that inspires people, with no one excluded to create a vision of the future filled with the joy of the Gospel.
2. Avoid the temptation of wanting to lead ourselves instead of being led by God.
3. Synodality is not a corporate strategic planning exercise. Rather it is a spiritual process that is led by the Holy Spirit.
4. We can be tempted to forget that we are pilgrims and servants on the path marked out for us by God. **Our humble efforts of organization and coordination are at the service of God who guides us on our way.** We are clay in the hands of the divine Potter (Isaiah 64:8).

The Consultations/Conversations – Roles and Responsibilities of Synod Coordinators

Synod Coordinators play a pivotal role as the planners and facilitators of the conversations.

Important qualities of Coordinators:

- Are at home with their Catholic faith
- Are prayerful and reflective
- Have strong interpersonal skills
- Have effective communication skills
- Are willing participants in the synodal process
- Are able to maintain a “big picture” view without injecting their personal agenda
- Can focus a conversation
- Can connect participants with each other without becoming the centre of the conversation

The Consultations/Conversations – Roles and Responsibilities of Synod Coordinators

A Catholic professional facilitator — or someone else with higher level facilitation skills — may be needed on occasion when participants come from marginalized groups (e.g., different ethnic or cultural groups, abuse survivors, youth, LGBTQ, persons with disabilities, migrants/refugees, etc.) or when special interest groups are participating in a particular consultation.



The Synodal Questions

The current Synodal Process we are undertaking is guided by a fundamental question:

“How does this ‘journeying together’ take place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allowing the Church to proclaim the Gospel?

AND

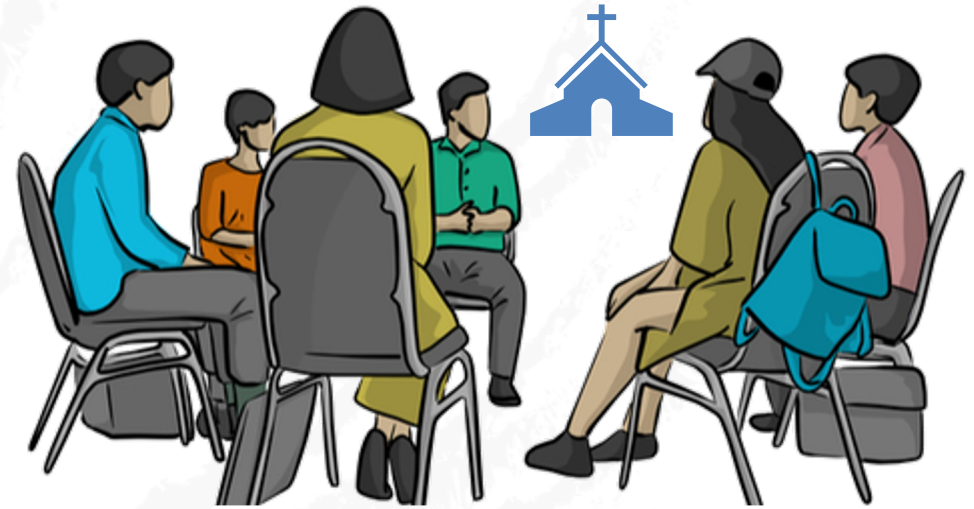
“What steps is the Spirit inviting us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church”.

People have to be encouraged to tell their stories.

Throughout the diocesan phase, it is helpful to keep in mind the need for some structure to the conversation, so that it can be synthesised and effectively inform the writing of the working documents.

Structure of the Synodal Conversation

1. Gathering Prayer and Faith Sharing
2. Short remarks (perhaps by video) by Bishop or Pastoral Leader
3. Explanation of the Purpose, Roles, and Process
4. Focus the Consultation with Questions
5. Table Discussions
6. Large Group Feedback
7. Brief Evaluation
8. Sending Forth Prayer



It would be helpful for participants if the facilitators add time frames to each part of the consultation.

Facilitating the Conversations

1. How is this “journeying together” to announce the Gospel happening today in our parish, community, religious congregation etc?
2. Who else do we need to reach out to, listen to and learn from, or to include in our synodal consultations and in our faith community? Whose voices are currently not being heard? Who is absent from these discussions?
3. What do you think would make our parish, community etc better?
4. What can each of us do and what can we do collectively to make it better?
5. What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?

Facilitating the Conversations

Using the “Recalling of Our Experiences” Approach

1. Focus the recalling:

- What are our experiences of journeying together in communion, participation, mission (Synodality) in our local Church?
- What joys did those experiences bring?
- What difficulties and obstacles have we encountered?
- What wounds did those experiences reveal?
- What insights have those experiences elicited?

Facilitating the Conversations

Using the “Recalling of Our Experiences” Approach

2. Gather the fruits to share:

- What paths forward are opening up for our local Church?
- Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound?
- What are the areas for change for our Church and what steps can be taken?

Group Discussion

Synod team Members and Coordinators meet, greet and engage in dialogue.

In the breakout rooms you will meet members of the Synod Team who will be journeying with you.

The Fruits of the Synodal Process

“The hope is that the experience of the Synodal Process will bring about a new springtime for listening, discernment, dialogue, and decision-making, so that the whole People of God can better journey together with one another and the entire human family, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

“This Synod not only expects responses that can assist the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to be held in Rome in October 2023, but also desires **to promote and develop the practice and experience of being Synodal in the course of the process and in the future moving forward.**”

Vademecum

The Fruits of the Synodal Process

Listening should become an integral part of Church governance and a way of being church.

The change begins with us!!! We are the church and the time for change is now!!!

Each one of us should be transformed by the Synodal experience, emerging from it with a better appreciation of God's call for us to be missionary disciples, journeying together with others as one people of God.

Next Steps

Coordinators' Consultation/Conversation Schedule	December 18 2021
Nationwide individual and group conversations	January – March 2022
Submit Synod Team Report	End of April 2022

During the conversations Synod Team members will maintain contact with the parishes/commissions/communities for which they are responsible.



Let the journey begin!

COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY





THANK YOU !

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

