

An Overview of the Parish Synod Process

1. Bishop Soto on the Diocesan Phase of the Synod on Synodality:

“On Sunday, October 17, 2021, we joined dioceses throughout the world in preparing for next the Synod of Bishops 2023. Pope Francis’ synodal initiative supports our own efforts to grow in holiness together as I proposed in my pastoral letter, Call to Holiness. At the heart of the Holy Father’s proposal and our work in the diocese is the dynamic engagement of the parish pastoral councils. The convening and conversations of parish pastoral councils will be essential to initial diocesan phase of the two-year synodal process. As parish diocesan councils do their work, together with their pastors, I encourage you to be open to as many people as possible, the active members, the lapsed members of our parish communities, non-Catholic neighbors from the communities surrounding the parish, as well as the poor and the marginalized neighbors. Let’s look upon it as an invitation to all of us, the People of God in this diocese, to examine how our pastoral councils serve Christ and the missionary mandate of the gospel he has entrusted to us. Let us also dream about the missionary Church the Holy Spirit is calling us to become.”

The Bishop’s full video message can be viewed here: <https://www.scd.org/synod>

2. Expectations for Parishes:

Bishop Soto expects each parish council chairperson to organize listening sessions in the parish in accordance with the synodal process between November 2021 and February 1, 2022. This can be accomplished in three ways:

- a. Organize one listening session of up to 10 participants in your parish
- b. Organize several listening sessions of up to 10 participants each in your parish
- c. Organize a larger convening in your parish hall and break out into small groups of up to 10 participants each

3. Preparation of Facilitators:

Listen to the recording by Sr. Karla for lay facilitators for guidance on the methodology and setup of a parish listening session – available here: <https://www.scd.org/synod/facilitators>

- a. What a listening session aims to achieve: capture people’s experiences, hopes, burdens and dreams
- b. What a listening session is not: debate, discussion, issue-centered
- c. A listening session is a spiritual conversation that evokes people’s experiences and dreams with the church
- d. Be intentional in finding a broad range of participants: active Catholics, lapsed Catholics, poor, marginalized etc.
- e. Choose a good note taker. Notes will be submitted online: <https://catholic.formstack.com/forms/synodnotes>
- f. Have a laptop available to play introductory videos and the PowerPoint presentation

- g. Prepare ways to show the image clearly (laptop, screen etc.)
- h. Prepare prayerful environment for session (prayer table, candle, etc.)
- i. Set up 12 chairs in a circle



4. Agenda of a listening session:

- Opening prayer (synod prayer)
- Introductions of participants
- Introductory videos on the synod and short version of methodology of the session
 - o Watch/download English intro video: <https://vimeo.com/638261331>
 - o Watch/download Spanish intro video: <https://vimeo.com/638262089>
- Ground rules (Prayer, Respect, Trust, Listening, Sharing, Discernment)
- Introduce facilitator and identify note taker
- Biblical Image: Read scripture, Broad description of the encounter, Silent Reflection on Biblical Image
- Reflection Questions, Silent reflection, Sharing, Silence, Silence
- Next steps: 10-page summary of all diocesan listening session goes to the USCCB and concludes the diocesan phase of the synod on synodality
- Closing prayer

5. Duration of a consultation session: Overall, two hours; spend 30 minutes on introductions and prayer, one hour on questions 1-2, after an extended pause move to questions 3-4 for the next 30 minutes.

6. Preparation of note takers:

- a. Each listening session requires a note taker
- b. Note taker will attempt to note the following data:
 - Name of note taker
 - Parish of listening session
 - Date of listening session
 - Number of people in a listening session
 - Number of active and non-active Catholics in a listening session
 - Age range of participants
- c. Note taker will capture:

- The life-giving experiences of church shared in the group
- The burdens and challenges shared in the group
- People's dreams about the church and where the Holy Spirit calls us to grow
- Two or three themes are emerging out of each session

d. Note taker will then input these notes in a digital form a couple days after the session or no later than February 15, 2022. To submit notes from listening session:

<https://catholic.formstack.com/forms/synodnotes>



Additional Materials: 50 prayer cards in English & 50 prayer cards in Spanish with the image, the synod prayer and the reflection questions will be provided for each parish. Additional cards can be ordered by emailing Aimee De Leon at adeleon@scd.org

- Biblical Image: Multiplication of the Loaves (Matthew 14:13-21)



- Reflection Questions (Please allow a time of silence, respectful sharing and listening for each reflection question)

1. Reflecting on the image – what experiences of church come to your mind that are life giving?
2. What do you bring to this encounter with Jesus that is burdening and challenging?
3. Where do you sense the Spirit is leading you to grow more deeply, to engage more fully?
4. After we heard all this: What touches you the most? What begins to emerge? What is the most significant moment for you?

- Synod Prayer:

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather 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.

- PowerPoint presentation will be provided that includes the synod prayer, the biblical image, and the reflection questions. All listening session materials including this document, videos, PowerPoint and facilitators instruction sheet can be downloaded here: <https://www.scd.org/synod/facilitators>

