



DIOCESE OF SALFORD

# Diocesan Stage of the Universal Synod

## Parish Guide

### Introduction

The synodal process is about spiritual conversation and discernment. The purpose is not to come with a goal or agenda in mind, but to come with a spirit of openness, ready to listen and share with one another so that we might better discover what the Holy Spirit is saying.

This Synod poses the following fundamental question:

**A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, ‘journeys together.’  
How is this ‘journeying together’ happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our ‘journeying together’? (PD 26)**

Parishes are permitted to make copies/distribute electronically of any of these resources. Please share these on your parish website, newsletter, noticeboard, and social media and with your associated schools. We want to hear from as many people as possible. If you require printed copies of these resources, please request these by emailing [synod@dioceseofsalford.org.uk](mailto:synod@dioceseofsalford.org.uk).

The deadline for submissions is Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Then, after national and continental gatherings, the Synod of Bishops will gather in Rome in 2023 to reflect on what has been heard.

### Ways of responding

There are several ways to engage with the Diocesan phase of the Universal Synod. Here are just some suggestions:

1. Via an online submission or via the paper form - [www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/faith/synod](http://www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/faith/synod).
2. By email - [synod@dioceseofsalford.org.uk](mailto:synod@dioceseofsalford.org.uk)
3. By Post - ‘Synod, Cathedral Centre, 3 Ford Street, Salford, M3 6DP’.
4. A parish collective response - This could be led by existing parish groups (Hope in the Future Team, Shared Leadership Team, Prayer Group etc.) or feedback could be gathered after Mass, in place of a homily, at a specific parish open meeting or by contacting parishioners on your parish database.
5. A school collective response - via chaplaincy teams, school council, SLT, governors, parents.

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For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission

## Facilitating a Parish Gathering

Facilitating any meeting or gathering can be tough. There are many voices, some louder and some quieter. We want to offer some guidance that will help ensure that any gathering within the parish is able to create a space where there is both active listening and speaking from the heart. We want to ensure that the most important voice in this whole process is not lost or forgotten, the voice of the Holy Spirit.

A member of the group should be appointed to be the group facilitator. A timekeeper and notetaker should also be appointed.

### Environment

First you will need to choose where to hold your gathering. This could take place in the church, parish hall, presbytery, or school. To create a prayerful environment, you may like to create a prayer space, with a candle, cross and a bible. You may like to provide refreshments and arrange the space, so attendees are around tables to encourage discussion, instead of in rows.

### Suggested Schedule (for a 2-hour period) - timing can be changed/shortened/extended

1. The facilitator welcomes the participants and begins with a short period of prayer, include a fitting passage from Scripture (10 minutes)
2. Introduce or appoint someone to take notes (2 minutes)
3. Ask for a volunteer as a timekeeper (2 minutes)
4. Set the tone for the Discernment Circle and describe the process - explained below (6 minutes)
5. First round of sharing (40 minutes) - ***make bullet points on the template provided***
6. Break (10 minutes)
7. Second round of sharing (45 minutes) - ***agree a common response on the template provided***
8. Invite members to share a prayer of thanksgiving, perhaps including a song (5 minutes)

### Reflection on prayerful listening

The listening phase of the Synodal Path is a privileged time for the whole Church, the diocese, and for each local parish, to listen carefully and attentively to what 'the Spirit says to the churches' (Revelation 3:22). We are called to listen to the voice of the Lord, so that walking together in his way, we might call others to follow him in the way that leads to life and freedom. In order to deepen our walk with the Lord Jesus, united with Our Lady who always walks beside us, we need to listen with the ear of our hearts. This process begins with silence before the Lord, and continues with our own attentive listening as we talk together. There is a constant movement from silence to dialogue and back to silence so as to enable the truth of what the Lord is saying to us to emerge and become concrete.

## Time of Prayer

### Opening Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

**And You shall renew the face of the earth.**

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations,  
Through Christ Our Lord, **Amen.**

### Reading from Sacred Scripture

*The Road to Emmaus - Luke 24:13-35*

Two of the disciples of Jesus were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them, 'What matters are you discussing as you walk along?' They stopped short, their faces downcast.

Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days.' 'What things?' he asked. 'All about Jesus of Nazareth' they answered 'who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.'

Then he said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?' Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself.

When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. 'It is nearly evening' they said 'and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'

They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, 'Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

## Prayer for the Universal Synod

*Adsumus, Sancte Spiritus - St. Isidore of Seville - used before each session at Vatican II*

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.

Hail Mary...

Our Lady of Mount Carmel ... pray for us  
St Joseph ... pray for us  
St Francis of Assisi ... pray for us

Come, Holy Spirit, Come!

## The end of the meeting

The end of the meeting is an excellent opportunity to spend some time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, committing to the Lord all that he has revealed in the course of our day together.

## **A suggested process for listening**

After a time of prayer, copies of the 'Reflection Questions' (which can be downloaded from the Diocesan website) could be displayed on a screen or handed out. Give the group 5 minutes to read and reflect on the Reflection Questions.

Starting with the facilitator, each person has 5 minutes to respond to one or more of the questions. Perhaps consider using a visible timer. The focus is to listen to others, rather than simply thinking about what you want to say. Open your heart and your mind to listen to the one who is speaking. Between each person, take a 30 second pause to recall what was said. Going around the group, participants can share one after the other. This is not a discussion, rather each person in turn has chance to share without comment from anyone else. The note taker should make bulletin points under each question which is commented on, on the template provided

Take a break (10 minutes).

In the second round of speaking no one is obliged to speak, and participants speak spontaneously without any particular order. However, each person can only share once in the second round. The reflections in this round are generally shorter than the first. This is not a time for discussing or refuting what someone else says, nor for bringing up what you forgot to mention in the first round.

Rather, it is an opportunity to ask questions like:

- ‘Gathering the fruits’ and asking: what may the Spirit of God be saying?
- How were you affected by what you heard?
- Is there a common thread in what was shared?
- Is there something missing that you had expected would be said?
- Were you especially touched by a particular sharing?
- Have you received any particular insight or revelation? What is it?
- Where did you experience a sense of harmony with others as we shared with one another?

This second round especially enables the group to realise what unites them. It is here that signs of the action of the Holy Spirit in the group begin to manifest themselves, and the conversation becomes an experience of shared discernment. The facilitator may like to help the group to agree a common response and the note taker can summarise this on the template provided.

### Parish Feedback Sheet

A Parish Feedback Sheet can be downloaded from [www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/faith/synod](http://www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/faith/synod).

Under each question, there is space for the individual responses from round 1 of listening and space for the groups agreed common response during round 2 of listening. You may write as much or as little as you like. If a question isn't addressed or a consensus isn't reached, just leave these boxes empty.

Once completed, please email or post to the addresses below before 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

Thank you for taking part in this process.

*Notes about spiritual conversations adapted from ‘Global Colloquium of the Jesuit Education Network; La conversation spirituelle’ and the Archdiocese of Southwark.*

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