

March 13, 2022

Dear Parishioner,

As the universal Church prepares for the 2023 Synod on Synodality, it is important that you take active participation. Currently we are in the “Local Churches Phase”. This phase is dedicated to gathering laity’s prayerful input on the 10 themes that will guide the Synodal Discussions in March 2023. For this reason, I ask that you prayerfully consider submitting your input on one, several, or all the themes that the Church intends to reflect upon during this unique event.

You will find below a list of questions that will facilitate your reflection. The questions are divided into the 10 themes that will guide the synodal discussions.

Here are some instructions for your reflections.

- a. You may reflect on these questions alone, with your family or with your parish group (e. g. Legion of Mary, St. Vincent the Paul Society; prayer group, etc.).
- b. If you choose to reflect on the themes provided alone, you may profit from the process described below for group discussion. Please make sure that you submit the conclusions of your reflections using this link: <https://www.myolf.com>
- c. If you decide to undertake a group discussion/reflection, find below the steps that are to be followed:
 - a. Participants form small groups of about 6-7 persons from diverse backgrounds. This method takes about at least an hour and comprises three rounds.
 - b. The discussion can center on one, several, or all the 10 themes that will guide the synodal discussions (please see the question below to facilitate the discussion).
 - c. In the first round, everyone takes equal turns to share the fruit of his or her prayer, in relation to the reflection questions circulated beforehand (see #5 of this Appendix). There is no discussion in this round and all participants simply listen deeply to each person and attend to how the Holy Spirit is moving within oneself, within the person speaking, and in the group as a whole.
 - d. In the second round, participants share what struck them most in the first round and what moved them during the time of silence. Some dialogue can also occur, and the same spiritual attentiveness is maintained. This is followed by a time of silence.
 - e. Finally in the third-round participants reflect on what seems to be resonating in the conversation and what moved them most deeply. New insights and even unresolved questions are also noted. Usually, each small group will have a facilitator and note-taker.
 - f. A document containing the conclusions of the meeting must be submitted via the link provided above. The document should provide separate conclusions on each of the themes that were discussed.

Questions to facilitate reflection/discussion (these questions are provided by the Vatican's Office for the Synod)

1. Companions on the journey

- Who are the companions you value most in the Church? Why? What does companionship mean for you? In what ways can the circles of companionship grow further?
- Share about a personal experience that made you feel a real sense of belonging in the Church. What happened and how did you feel? What made it possible? Or, share about a time when you felt that you were left out or that you did not belong. What made you feel that way?
- How can things be better?
- Who are the people who seem closer together in the Church and who are those who seem further apart? What do you think has caused this situation? How can we build better bridges in the community? How
- can we better include people at the margins?
- In what ways have people in your Church community been good companions to one another and to those beyond the Church? In what ways have you been a good companion to others?
- Have you ever distanced yourself from the Church community or do you know someone who has? What are some reasons? What would make you (or that person) come closer to the Church community?

2. Listening

- Who do you think are the people that the Church is listening to? Whose voices are not being heard enough? Who do you think are the various groups of people that the Church needs to listen to better?
- In what ways are the voices of the minorities being heard? How about specific groups such as the youth, women, migrants, etc.?
- Do you feel that you are being listened to in the Church? Why or why not? Share a recent concrete experience, whether positive or not.
- What enables you to listen to others? What might be some barriers or prejudices that prevent you from listening well?
- How can the Church do better to listen to everyone? How can we listen better to one another, especially those who have a different view from us?
- What are the "signs of the times" that we need to pay more attention to? What do we hear when we listen to the voice of the poor and the voice of creation?

3. Speaking out

- Do you know how, where, or to whom you can share your views when you have something to say in your Church community?

- Do you speak up regularly? Why or why not?
- What prevents people in your Church community from coming forward to make their views known? What helps them to do so?
- How can we promote honest and responsible communication in the Church and in society?

4. Celebration

- What are the communal prayers and liturgical activities that you participate in most frequently? How do they make a difference in your life?
- What do you find most meaningful or life-giving in the liturgies of your local Church community? What do you find less meaningful or life-giving? How can they be made better?
- In your opinion, to what extent does your Church group or local Church community make decisions in a prayerful way based on the Word of
- God? Do you think the life and mission of your Church community has been based well on prayer and communal liturgy? Why or why not?
- In what ways are the liturgies in your Church community, especially the celebration of the Eucharist, inclusive and participatory? What further improvements are needed?

5. Sharing responsibility for our common mission

- What do you consider to be your mission or purpose in life? How did you discover this and what or who helped you to discover it?
- How do you find meaning in your daily life and work? In what way do you feel that you are part of the mission of Christ? Share about an experience that really made you feel this way.
- What is the Holy Spirit saying to you about your mission and vocation as a disciple of Christ? What help do you receive in discerning and following this?
- What do you think hinders people from being active missionary disciples?
- How does your local church community currently assist people to understand the Christian mission and discover their particular role in it? What can be done to help people discern and live their mission? In what ways do you collaborate with one another in your commitment to the Christian mission?

6. Dialogue in the Church and society

- Have you ever encountered an experience of meaningful dialogue between diverse peoples or groups in your Church? Share about this experience. What enabled the dialogue to be fruitful?
- What do you think promotes or hinders dialogue in your local Church and society? What are the various groups of people who need to dialogue with each other more?
- How are conflicts or disagreements usually handled in your community?
- Share about some striking incidents that come to mind. What can we learn from them?
- How can we promote better dialogue in the Church and society?

- To what extent is there fruitful dialogue and collaboration among clergy, laity, and religious in your local Church community? What can be improved?
- Share about your experiences in dialogue, if any, with people of other faiths or with non-believers. What do you learn from these experiences? How can the Church dialogue better with other religions and with the various sectors of society?

7. Ecumenism

- What interactions does your local church community have with other Christian traditions? Do you participate regularly in these interactions?
- Share about your experience.
- How would you describe the relations among the Catholic and other Christian churches in your local community? What words or images would you use? What promotes or hinders the dialogue and collaboration among these churches?
- What are the joys and fruits, or challenges and difficulties, in the relations among different Christian denominations? How can we walk together better?

8. Authority and participation

- How and by whom are pastoral plans, goals, and new ideas usually developed in your local Church community? Have you ever been part of this process?
- What images come to mind when you think of authority and leadership in your Church? How would you describe the model of authority and leadership? Share a personal experience, if any. What are the areas for improvement?
- What are the current ways in which lay people participate in the life and mission of the Church? In your opinion, what proportion of lay people do you think are participating actively? What promotes or hinders their participation?
- Do you feel you can come forward or take action easily if you want to do something in the church? What helps or hinders you? What image would you use to describe your place in the Church? Why?
- What can the clergy do to encourage more participation in the life and mission of the church? What can the lay people do?
- What are some good practices in your Church that promote responsibility? Share a memorable experience you have had, if any.
- What practices can be improved?

9. Discerning and deciding

- How are decisions usually made in your Church community? Share some personal experiences, whether positive or otherwise.
- What are some good examples of collaboration in decision-making which you have seen in your Church community?

- Have you ever been asked for your opinions or suggestions regarding a decision in your Church community? From your observation, how much consultation and discernment usually occur in decision-making in your Church community? To what extent do the current ways of making major decisions promote listening to the whole People of God? How can this be improved?
- How much do you know about communal discernment or about ways to listen together as a community to the promptings of the Holy Spirit?
- Have you ever been a part of such discernment? What do you think promotes or hinders it?
- In your opinion, how much transparency and accountability are there in decision-making in your local Church? What helps or hinders it? How can this be improved?

10. Forming ourselves in synodality

- How do people in your local Church community currently learn to dialogue, collaborate, and participate in mission?
- What are the current efforts in lay leadership formation in your local Church, or formation in communal discernment? What needs to be improved?
- What are the current strengths and weaknesses in the formation of clergy, religious, and laity towards promoting communion, participation, and mission?