

Suggestions for Discussion at Upcoming Deanery Meetings

Topic I: Pastoral Council

The overwhelming opinion was that parishes would like to have some form of training for councils and new council members.

Brainstorm answers to the following questions which will be given to the DPC

- What areas require the MOST guidance from the Diocese?
- What areas require the LEAST guidance from the Diocese?
- What is the best approach for giving that guidance (in-person, video, podcast, slide show, pamphlet, other, etc.)?

Use some or all of the following to help generate answers to the previous three questions

- **Makeup:**
 - How many members? How are they identified/selected? How often do they meet? How hard is it to find willing members?
- **Interaction with parish staff:**
 - Who from the staff attends meetings? Is there a lot of dialogue between meetings? Is there a perception that Council advice is taken and implemented by staff?
- **Competency:**
 - Does the Council have a good grasp of their role and responsibility? Do members ever communicate with (and get feedback from) other parishioners? Do members understand the areas of parish work they are involved with (worship, formation, service, community, etc. NOT administration)?
- **Planning:**
 - Does the Council engage in active planning? Or, does it simply tackle topics brought before it? Does the parish have a Pastoral Plan? If yes, does the plan emphasize catechesis, evangelization, and faith in action?
- **Transparency:**
 - Does the Council post its agenda and minutes? Are parishioners generally aware of Council topics?

TOPIC II: Synod of Bishops

Synod/Synodality – represents the main road for the Church, called to renew herself under the action of the Spirit and by listening to the Word. Church and Synod are synonymous. Synodality depends on the decision to initiate processes of listening, dialogue and community discernment in which each and every person can participate and contribute.

Purpose of the Synod – it is not to produce documents, but *“to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands”*. (Francis, *Address at the Opening of the Synod of Bishops on Young People* (3 October 2018))

Objective of the Synod – to listen, as the entire People of God, to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church.

Dialogue on the Fundamental Question and Record Responses

A synodial Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together”.

- How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church?
- How does it allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to Her?
- What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

Use the following to help generate answers to the questions above

- What experiences does this call to mind?
- In relation to these experiences: what are the joys, difficulties, obstacles, wounds, insights?
- In relation to the Holy Spirit: does the Spirit’s voice resound in these experiences? What is the Spirit asking of us? What are the points to be confirmed, prospects for change, steps to be taken? Where is the consensus? What paths are opening up?

Ten Themes in Addition to the Fundamental Question

Ten themes have been developed to highlight significant aspects of “lived synodality” to help explore the Fundamental Question. The aim is not to answer all of the questions under each of the themes, but to choose those that are most relevant in your local context.

At your Deanery meeting review the ten themes (listed below) and decide how to proceed

- Schedule one or two Deanery meetings before the February 2nd DPC meeting.
- Decide to talk about all ten themes or selected ones. If the latter, which ones?
- Assign someone to record (written or typed) the input given at your Deanery meetings.
- Collect all the input from Deanery meetings and submit to DPC by February 2nd.
- Allow Deanery members to submit additional comments via email after the Deanery meeting.
- Assign “homework” for Deanery members to review questions before your next meeting.

1. Companions on the journey – in Church and society, we walk side by side on the same road

- a. Who are those who “walk together”?
- b. Who are those who seem further apart?
- c. How are we called to grow as companions?
- d. What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

2. Listening – the first step, which requires an open mind and heart without prejudice

- a. How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore?
- b. How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people?
- c. What facilitates or inhibits our listening?
- d. How well do we listen to those on the peripheries?
- e. How is the contribution of consecrated men and women integrated?
- f. What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own
- g. What space is there for the voice of minorities, especially people who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?

3. Speaking out – speak with courage and parrhesia (in freedom, truth and charity)

- a. What enables or hinders speaking up courageously, candidly and responsibly in our local Church and in society?
- b. When and how do we manage to say what is important to us?
- c. How does the relationship with the local media work (not only Catholic media)?
- d. Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?

4. Celebration – “walking together” only possible if based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist

- a. How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community?
- b. How do they inspire the most important decisions?
- c. How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy?
- d. What space is given to participating in the ministries of lector and acolyte?

5. Sharing responsibility for our common mission – synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, all members are called to participate

- a. How is every baptized person called to participate in the mission of the Church?
- b. What hinders the baptized from being active in mission?
- c. What areas of mission are we neglecting?
- d. How does the community support its members who serve society in various ways (social and political involvement, scientific research, education, promoting social justice, protecting human rights, caring for the environment etc.)?
- e. How does the Church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way?
- f. How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?

6. Dialogue in Church and Society – Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but also enables mutual understanding

- a. To what extent do diverse peoples in our community come together for dialogue?
- b. What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church?
- c. How do we promote collaboration with neighbouring dioceses, religious communities in the area, lay associations and movements etc.?
- d. How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed?
- e. What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to?
- f. What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation?
- g. How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: spheres of politics, economics, culture, civil society and people who live in poverty?

7. Ecumenism – the dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey

- a. What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations?
- b. What do we share and how do we journey together?
- c. What fruits have we drawn from walking together?
- d. What are the difficulties?
- e. How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

- 8. Authority & Participation** – A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church
- a. How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken?
 - b. How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church?
 - c. How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice?
 - d. How are evaluations conducted and by whom?
 - e. How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted?
 - f. Have we had fruitful experiences of synodality on a local level?
 - g. How do synodal bodies function at the level of the local Church (Pastoral Councils in parishes and dioceses, Presbyteral Council etc.)?
 - h. How can we foster a more synodal approach in our participation and leadership?

- 9. Discerning and deciding** – In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community
- a. What methods and processes do we use in decision-making?
 - b. How can they be improved?
 - c. How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures?
 - d. Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God?
 - e. What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice?
 - f. What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability?
 - g. How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?

- 10. Forming ourselves in synodality** – synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning
- a. How does our church community form people to be more capable of “walking together”, listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue?
 - b. What formation is offered to foster discernment and the exercise of authority in a synodal way?