



Why “synod?”

In its technical sense a synod is a gathering of church leaders to discuss matters of faith or church practice. There have been many such gatherings in the history of the Church. The word literally means “journeying together” (from the Greek word *synodía*), to indicate that this process should always be done in the company of others and never alone.

“The Church is exploring a new way of being Church to equip our local churches to live together in communion, achieve greater participation, and move forward more intentionally in our mission in and throughout the world. This Synod is an invitation to engage with those on the margins of our Church and society, an opportunity to encounter those who may disagree with us or think differently than us. Everyone’s voice and experience are vital to the path we are asked to walk together throughout this process.

This time of listening and dialogue is an invitation to adopt an orientation of welcome and understanding, to return to our mission, and build communion. As we do so we can both strengthen our faith and remain true to our teachings while deepening our relationships with all the People of God.

This synod is an invitation to really listen to the lived experiences of the whole of the People of God and discern, together, where the Spirit is calling us as a Church. This may not always be a straightforward process and does not have any set outcomes or intended benchmarks.”

(Source: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

*For information and resources on the Synod,
please visit oldstpats.org/Synod*

Pope Francis' Speech to the Delegation for the Presentation of the 'E Giornalismo' Prize (8/26/23)

Last weekend, Pope Francis met with a group of Italian journalists and shared with them his hopes for the Church's Synod as hundreds of lay leaders, priests, religious, and bishops gather in Rome from around the world in October. In his comments, we find not only an explanation of what Pope Francis means by a synodal process, but we also see what the Pope believes are the origins and vision for this Synod on Synodality.

Synod (noun): making a way together, walking a path together
syn + hodos = 'with' + 'path'

"The hope is this: that today, in a time in which everyone seems to comment on everything, even regardless of the facts and often even before being informed, we rediscover and return to cultivating more the principle of reality - reality is superior to the idea, always -: the reality of facts, the dynamism of facts; which are never static and always evolve, towards good or evil, so as not to run the risk of the information society turning into the disinformation society.

To do this, however, we need to spread a culture of encounter, a culture of dialogue, a culture of listening to the other and his or her reasons. Digital culture has brought us so many new possibilities for exchange, but it also risks turning communication into slogans. No, communication is always back and forth. I speak, I listen, and I respond, but always dialogue. It is not a slogan. I am concerned, for example, about the manipulations of those who interestingly propagate fake news to steer public opinion. Please, let us not give in to the logic of opposition, let us not be influenced by the language of hatred.

And now I come to the request for help. Precisely at this time, when there is much talk and little listening, and when the sense of the common good is in danger of weakening, the Church as a whole has embarked on a journey to rediscover the word together. We must rediscover the word together. Walk together. Question together. Take responsibility together for community discernment, which for us is prayer, as the first Apostles did: this is synodality, which we would like to make a daily habit in all its expressions. Precisely for this purpose, in just over a month, bishops and lay people from all over the world will meet here in Rome for a Synod on synodality: listening together, discerning together, praying together. The word together is very important. We are in a culture of exclusion, which is a kind of communication capitalism.

I am well aware that speaking of a "Synod on Synodality" may seem something abstruse, self-referential, excessively technical, of little interest to the general public. But what has happened over the past year, which will continue with the assembly next October and then with the second stage of Synod 2024, is something truly important for the Church. It is a journey that Saint Paul VI began at the end of the Council, when he created the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, because he had realized that in the Western Church synodality had disappeared, whereas in the Eastern Church they have this dimension. And this years-long journey - 60 years - is bearing great fruit. Please, let us get used to listening to each other, to talking, not cutting our heads off for a word. To listen, to discuss in a mature way. This is a grace we all need in order to move forward. And it is something the Church today offers the world, a world so often so incapable of making decisions, even when our very survival is at stake. We are trying to learn a new way of living relationships, listening to one another to hear and follow the voice of the Spirit. We have opened our doors, we have offered everyone the opportunity to participate, we have taken into account everyone's needs and suggestions. We want to contribute together to build the Church where everyone feels at home, where no-one is excluded. That word of the Gospel that is so important: everyone. Everyone, everyone: there are no first-, second- or third-class Catholics, no. All together. Everyone. It is the Lord's invitation."

*The full English text translation of Pope Francis' Speech to the Delegation for the Presentation of the
'E Giornalismo' Prize (8/26/23) can be found at Vatican.va.*