

The Synodal Process 2021 – 2023



“The Church will learn from the experience of walking together, and together reflecting on the journey undertaken, what processes can help it to live communion, achieve participation and open itself to mission.”

QUESTIONS FROM POPE FRANCIS FOR OUR REFLECTION IN PREPARATION FOR THE 2023 SYNOD OF BISHOPS IN ROME

1. COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY – In our local Church, who are those who ‘walk together’? Who are those who seem further apart? How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

2. LISTENING – How is God speaking to us? As a Church, how well do we listen to those on the peripheries or the margins? How can we listen and be listened to better?

3. SPEAKING OUT – In speaking out courageously and responsibly in our local church and in society, what enables or hinders us? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us?

4. CELEBRATION – ‘Walking together’ is only possible if based on communal listening to the word of God and the celebration of the Eucharist. How do prayer, the Mass and other liturgical celebrations inspire and guide the life and mission in our community? How do they inspire our most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy?

5. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION – We are all called by our baptism to participate in the mission of the Church as missionary disciples. How are lay people called to do this? What hinders us from being active in the mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting?

6. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY – To what extent do the different sets of people in our community come together for dialogue? What are the places and means of dialogue within our local church? How do we promote collaboration with others, and to what issues in the whole Church and society do we need to pay more attention?

7. ECUMENISM – What relationships does our church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? What do we already share, and how do we journey together? What are the difficulties? How can we take the next step in walking forward together?

8. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION – How is authority or governance exercised within our local church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice? How and by whom are evaluations conducted? How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted? How can we foster a more synodal approach in our participation and leadership?

9. DISCERNING AND DECIDING – In a synodal style, decisions are made through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community. What methods and processes do we use in such decision-making? How can they be improved? What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice?

10. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY – Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation and on-going learning. 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?

* * *

Pope Francis has said that the experience of the Covid pandemic during the past two years (2019-2021) is a unique opportunity to reflect on how the Church lives Synodality. In keeping with this view, **Bishop Mark has suggested the following questions for our reflection, either individually or in groups:**

COMMUNION: In what ways has the unity of our parishes in faith and charity, above all in Eucharistic communion, been either strengthened or weakened during the past two years?

PARTICIPATION: What has the experience of this time taught us about participation in the Church's life?

MISSION: What have been the fruits of this time for mission to those outside the life of our parishes, especially those on the margins of society? What more needs to be done?

* * *

What to do next?

1. Pray to the Holy Spirit for the work of the Synodal Process.
2. Reflections on these questions and any other comments you would wish to make, either as an individual or a member of a group, can be sent to either of these addresses:

The Synod Secretariat, Bishop's Office, 13 Belmont, Shrewsbury SY1 1TE
Synod@dioceseofshrewsbury.org

* * *

What happens then?

- Sunday, 10 October 2021 the whole Synodal Process began in the Diocese of Rome, and in every other Diocese on Sunday, October 17, 2021.
- Tuesday, 1st March 2022 All written reflections to be received by the Bishop's Office. These will be collated and summarized in a document of not more than 10 pages (stipulated by Rome).
- Sunday, 3rd April 2022 In the light of this, as Successor of the Apostles Bishop Mark will offer his discernment as to what the Holy Spirit is saying to this Diocese.
- Friday, 8th April 2022 All such Diocesan discernments will be sent to the Secretariat of the Bishops Conference of England and Wales where they will be collated and summarized in preparation for the Plenary Assembly of the Bishops of England and Wales in Cardiff 2nd – 6th May.
- The combined report agreed on by the Bishops will then be sent to the European Bishops Conference where the process of discernment will be repeated; it will be then be sent to Universal Church (Rome).
- These final reports from Bishops in all the Continents will form part of the preparatory working document (the *lineamenta*) for the Synod of Bishops in the autumn of 2023.

* * *