



How can we be a synodal Church in mission?

REFLECTION GUIDE *Towards the Second Assembly*

As the Church prepares for the Second Session of the Synodal Assembly in October 2024, local Churches are invited to contribute by deepening aspects of the Synthesis Report that are fundamental to the Synod's theme. These contributions are guided by the question: *How can we be a synodal Church in mission?*

The objective of these new reflections is to identify the paths we can follow and the tools we might adopt in our different contexts and circumstances in order to enhance the unique contribution of each baptised person and of each Church in the one mission of proclaiming the Risen Lord and his Gospel to the world today.

Preparing for the group reflection session

For Group leaders: Prior to your meeting with other members of your group, it is recommended that you read through this Reflection Guide and become familiar with the steps of this document. Note that this Guide is intended for groups of 7-10 people. Larger or smaller groups may need to make adjustments to allow everyone to participate fully.

Groups are encouraged to determine the best approach to take in the time possible. "Realistically, it will not be possible to examine all the implications. Therefore, each [group] is invited to focus on those aspects that enable it to make a contribution in light of its own situation, character and experience, sharing good practices that represent visible and concrete signs of synodality." (General Secretariat, *Towards October 2024*, 3) As Group leader, you may choose to discern which sections/chapters of the Synthesis Report your group will focus on.

For Group members:

- Take time to pray, perhaps using the Synod prayer in Step 1 of this guide.
- Read the sections/chapters of the [Synthesis Report](#) that your group will focus on. (Note that Chapters 8-12, 16 and 18 are relevant to the reflection questions.)
- After your first reading, take time to reflect and observe your response.
- Read the sections/chapters a second time and note what in the text spoke to you.
- Prepare to discuss your reflections with the group.

PRAY TOGETHER

READ QUESTIONS
AND REFLECT

SHARE AND
LISTEN

PRAY AND
RESPOND

At the beginning of the group reflection, you are invited to pray together.
The following Scripture passage, which opens the Synthesis Report, is from 1 Cor 12:13 (NRSV):

For in the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body.

Take time to meditate on this or a similar verse, and on what God is sharing about the synodal journey through it. Some alternative Scripture readings are:

*How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity! (Psalm 133:1, NRSV)*

*You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp
puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.'*
(Matt 5:14-15, NRSV)

When you pray, you can use the words written below or just speak to God from your heart.

Prayer for the Synod: *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*

**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.

Read and reflect on the following questions in silence. Reflect on your experience of faith, life and the Church related to these questions.

How can we enhance the differentiated co-responsibility in the mission of all the members of the People of God?

1. What ways of relating, structures, processes of discernment and decision-making with regard to mission make it possible to recognise, shape, and promote co-responsibility?
2. What ministries and participatory bodies can be renewed or introduced to better express this co-responsibility?

Write a list of all the responses to these questions that come to mind.

Synthesis Report

The following chapters from the [Synthesis Report](#) are relevant to the reflection questions above. Your group leader might discern before the reflection session which sections/chapters are most relevant for your discussion.

Chapter 8 – Church is Mission

Chapter 9 – Women in the Life and Mission of the Church

Chapter 10 – Consecrated Life and Lay Associations and Movements: A Charismatic Sign

Chapter 11 – Deacons and Priests in a Synodal Church

Chapter 12 – The Bishop in Ecclesial Communion

Chapter 16 – Towards a Listening and Accompanying Church

Chapter 18 – Structures for Participation

Your responses to the questions may relate to one chapter or be more general in nature.

Round 1: Sharing My Reflection

- The facilitator poses each question and invites the group to respond. Speakers may work clockwise, or the facilitator may nominate someone to begin, and other participants follow.
- Everyone speaks for one or two minutes, sharing their reflection responses and adding to what was previously shared.
- When others are speaking, remember to listen with an open and humble heart. The focus is on listening to others rather than simply thinking about what you want to say.
- At the end of each question, the group pauses for a moment of silence. This may help absorb what was said, take a breather, and return to the next question.
- As participants are sharing, the facilitator takes brief notes of what has been discussed.

Round 2: Reflecting On The Sharing

- After the first sharing, this round is an opportunity to begin to prepare the group response.
- Here, the group is invited to answer questions like:
 - *What consoled me or struck me as I listened to my companions?*
 - *What did I hear? What did I feel? What was the Spirit saying to me/us?*
 - *Was I especially touched by a particular sharing?*
- Everyone speaks for one or two minutes. You may begin with the phrase, “*In the group I heard...and it left me feeling...*”.
- The facilitator makes notes of key points emerging from the group’s reflection.
- At the end of this sharing, the group pauses for a period of silence.

Round 3: Finalising the Group Response

- In this round, participants are not obliged to speak and can speak spontaneously.
- In preparing your group response, you may reflect on questions like:
 - *Thinking about what was shared, what should be included in our group’s response?*
 - *Is there a common thread? Is there something missing?*
 - *Have we received any particular insight or revelation? What is it?*
 - *Where did we experience a sense of harmony with others as we shared with one another?*
 - *What are the feelings of the group? Is there consensus or disagreement?*
- After everyone has finished speaking, the facilitator reconfirms the key points with the group and prepares a summarised version of the discussion.

At the end of the reflection time, you are invited to pray together. You can use the words below, or you might like to say a prayer of gratitude in your own words.

Creator God, we thank you for the encounter with one another today.

We know that where two or three are gathered, you are in our midst.

Thank you for being with us and for the courage to speak boldly and with passion, and the humility to listen with open hearts.

We ask you to continue to walk with us, as we discover the pathway toward the future you are calling us to.

Amen.

Submit Your Response To Your Diocesan Coordinator

- It is recommended that the group's response be captured in a short summary. You may find it helpful to compose this in a separate document.
- You are asked to include **5 to 7 key points** that capture the important parts of the discussion.
- Your response should reflect the diversity of views and opinions expressed, both positive and negative. It should be faithful to the people's voices and to whatever emerged from their reflection rather than a series of generalised or doctrinally correct statements.
- Views should not be excluded simply because they were expressed by a small minority of participants.
- Overall, the response should capture what the Holy Spirit has inspired the group to discern.

Your group's response will become your submission to your Diocese Contact Person.

A list of Diocese Contact Persons can be found at <https://catholic.org.au/synodalchurch>. If you have any problems, please contact the NCPR team at ncpr@catholic.org.au.

All responses must be submitted to your Diocese Contact Person by **Friday, 29 March 2024** (or on the alternative date determined by your diocese).



Thank you for contributing to the discernment process of the
XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

*“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed
in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then
gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues... But
strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.”*

(1 Cor 4:27-28,31)



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