



Diocese of Palm Beach Synod Listening & Discussion Session Information Packet

Background & Introduction:

Pope Francis has convened a Synod on Synodality to take place starting in October 2021 and culminating in a Synod of Bishops in Rome in October 2023. The Synodal process begins at the local or diocesan level across the whole world, then proceeds to the national conference level and culminates in the universal phase in Rome where Pope Francis plans to discern the consultations and issue a final decree on the Synod.

Simply put, *Synod* describes a church assembly and comes from a Greek word meaning “journey together” but can also refer to Jesus Himself, who is “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14,6). The objective of this current Synod is to listen, as the entire People of God, to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church regarding how we should support and strengthen each other in our faith.

In keeping with the overall objective of listening, the guiding theme for this Synod is “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.” These three dimensions can briefly be described as:

Communion – God graciously invites a diverse people into one faith through the covenant by which he gathers his people. The Word of God and the living Tradition of the Church inspire and ground us in that one faith. The communion we share finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity.

Participation – All the people who belong to God- laity, consecrated and ordained- are called to participate and respectfully engage in this dialogue, to be heard by one another.

Mission – The Church exists to evangelize, and we, the baptized, are called to witness to the love of God in our lives to the whole of humanity.

The Synod process is not a matter of gaining a consensus opinion, but of hearing everyone speak. It is not an exercise in parliamentary governance or a debate about the teachings and practices of the Church. Rather, as articulated by Bishop Gerald Barbarito in his *Living the Truth in Love* column on the Synod, “it is the means by which, as members of the Church, we make ourselves available to each other so that we can hear what each person has to say as a possible expression of the Holy Spirit.”

Ultimately, the Synod is a means for welcoming, acknowledging and expressing that we all belong to Christ and his Church and that we are called to discern how the Spirit invites us to be the Body of Christ.



Local Synod Process:

In this first phase, each diocese around the world will convene a local Synod. Here, in the Diocese of Palm Beach, Bishop Gerald Barbarito has invited all of us to embark on this journey of listening, embracing the diversity and complexity of our diocesan community. To include as many people as possible, there are different ways to participate:

- Regional gatherings (details will be forthcoming)
- Parish gatherings (if available)
- Formal ministry group
- Informal group of interested friends

These sessions can take place either in-person or virtually using platforms such as Zoom or Go-To-Meeting.

For parish level meetings, anyone interested should check with their own parish about details and how to participate. Details about the regional meetings will be posted on the website at www.diocesepb.org/Synod. Remember, any group can gather and facilitate their own Synod meeting to reflect on the Scripture passage and discuss the questions.

Details on how to organize and facilitate a Listening Session can be found below.

Individuals who cannot attend an in-person or virtual group session may participate by going online to www.diocesepb.org/Synod to read and reflect on our local synod foundational Scripture passage and then responding to the questions posted.

In the spirit of the Synod, all are invited to participate in whatever way you feel called by the Holy Spirit.

Regardless of how you participate, the listening/sharing process should take place in a spiritual setting that supports both openness in sharing as well as listening. Our local Synodal Process will be rooted in meditation on Scripture, specifically the story about the resurrected Jesus meeting the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35.

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.



Group Session Planner

Suggested Meeting Duration:	90 minutes
Suggested Agenda:	<u># Minutes</u>
Welcome/Opening Synod Prayer/Overview:	5
Scripture Reading and Reflection:	10
Break into Small Groups:	5
Questions: Listening and Sharing	
Communion:	20
Participation:	20
Mission:	20
Wrap Up/Group Summaries:	<u>10</u>
Total Time:	90

To prepare for your session, print out and provide copies of Prayer for the Synod, Scripture Passage and Questions for each participant.

Suggested Procedure:

Opening

Moderator opens the session with some welcome remarks and an overview of the process for the meeting. The Prayer for the Synod is provided for the opening prayer.

Scripture Reading and Reflection

Invite each participant to read through the passage quietly and reflect on the story as a whole. Then, moderator or another reader should slowly read the passage aloud to the whole group. Invite participants to listen carefully to the reading and note what words or word pictures resonate within. Then, allow for some time following the proclamation for individual reflection and noting which words or word pictures that stand out in the reading. Now, the group is prepared to discuss the questions in light of this Scripture passage.

Break into Small Groups

Invite participants to gather into small groups of eight to ten people to facilitate listening and sharing. Select one participant to serve as moderator and one to serve as note taker for each group. Please remind the note taker to write legibly.



Questions Discussion

Questions are organized into three general categories or dimensions. Plan for 20 minutes discussion time for each category if you plan to cover all the questions.

Wrap Up/Group Summaries

To wrap up and enable the participants to hear what the whole group has to say, consider asking a representative from each small group to share a brief overview of their discussions according to each category of questions.

At the end of your listening session, Moderator should collect the group responses to submit them to the diocese. Go to the Synod website at www.diocesepb.org/Synod and enter each of the responses from your session.

Update: Due to the extension granted by the Vatican, the response deadline has been extended to February 28, 2022.

Process for Individuals:

Go to the Synod website at www.diocesepb.org/Synod and click on the link for Individual Responses. First, prayerfully read the Scripture passage, slowly and silently and then reflect on it. Then, re-read the passage aloud, taking note of the words or word pictures that resonate within you. Now, reflect on and answer the questions that follow the Scripture passage.

Please complete no later than February 28, 2022.

For those who do not have online access, you may request a copy of the Synod Questions from your parish and respond in writing to:

Cathy Loh

Diocese of Palm Beach

PO Box 109650

Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410

Responses must be received by February 28, 2022.

All individual, group and parish level responses must be received no later than February 28, 2022. Submit at www.diocesepb.org/synod.



Scripture Reading for Reflection:
Luke 24:13-35 - The Appearance on the Road to Emmaus

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred.

And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast.

One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?"

And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him.



But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place.

Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive.

Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see."

And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!

Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.

As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther.

But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.



Luke 24:13-35 Continued

And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them.

With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.

Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?"

So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!"

Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Source: USCCB



Reflection Questions:

Considering the above story from the Gospel of Luke, reflect on and discuss the following questions.

Communion

- Who accompanies you on your faith journey? Who do you accompany on their faith journey?
- What does your relationship with Jesus look like? How does that relationship shape your daily life (Ex. Prayer, Scripture, Eucharist, Adoration, Devotions, Ministry, etc.)?
- What makes you feel like you belong to the Church? How does the Church reach out to you and respond to your needs?

Participation

- What inspires you in your relationship with Jesus? How important are prayer and liturgical celebrations in guiding your participation in the Church?
- What fears, doubts or confusion about the faith inhibit or affect your participation in the faith? Where do you go to share your concerns?
- In what ways are you called to share your gifts and talents with the Church community? How do you voice concerns or ideas about ministry needs in the local Church?

Mission

- What about the faith makes your “heart burn within” you? How do you share that excitement and awe with others outside your immediate family?
- In what ways have you dialogued or collaborated with believers of other religions or those with no religious affiliation?
- How can we, the Church, authentically witness the Gospel to those on the “outside” who live on the fringes of society whether it be economic, social or religious?