



2021-2023 Synod
Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth
Synod Session Participant Guide



Archdiocese of | Archidiocèse d'
Halifax-Yarmouth



Agenda

Welcome & Prayer (10 minutes)

Praying with scripture

Proclaim (5 minutes)

Personal reflection (10 minutes)

Group sharing (20 minutes)

Proclaim (5 minutes)

Group sharing (20 minutes)

Questions on Journeying Together

Personal reflection (10 minutes)

Group sharing (30 minutes)

Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for joining us for a spiritual conversation for the 2021-2023 Synod!

Sometimes the word “synod” refers to an assembly of the synod of bishops – a time when the Holy Father calls bishops from around the world to meet to pray and discern. But the word “synod” also refers to journeying together – to being a community that is united in purpose and mission, moving together in the same direction in this earthly pilgrimage. In everything we do, the Church is meant to be a “synodal” Church: though the Church is not a democracy, the voice of each person is valuable and their personal contribution is indispensable.

Every three years, bishops from around the world gather in Rome for a synod on a particular topic. In 2023 they will gather to discuss the topic of synodality itself. In preparation for this, Pope Francis has asked all bishops to consult and pray with their own dioceses to help determine how synodality is being lived out in our midst and how we need to grow in our experience of journeying together.

The purpose of this process is twofold: to *pray* and to *listen*. We are gathering communities in the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth in order to *pray* together and to *listen* to the unique contributions of each person. Everything that is shared and recorded in these conversations will not only be communicated with the global Church, but will also help shape the pastoral direction of the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth.

This is not meant to be a series of focus groups – these conversations are an opportunity to journey together as a diocesan Church. With openness to the Holy Spirit and those around us, we will pray, discuss, and discern where and how God is present in our current experience of Church and how He is calling us to grow.

Timeline

Here's a brief timeline of the synodal process for the local Church of Halifax-Yarmouth:

<i>October 10, 2021</i>	Pope Francis officially opens synod in Rome
<i>October 15, 2021</i>	Archbishop Dunn officially opens synod in Halifax-Yarmouth at the 2021 Assembly of the People of God
<i>October 16, 2021</i>	Parish delegations are trained at the 2021 Assembly to be facilitators for the synod process at their own parishes
<i>October 17, 2021 to January 31, 2022</i>	Parishes host 3-4 synod sessions in their own communities and submit their responses; Archdiocesan staff host synod sessions to engage the broader community and external groups
<i>February 2022 to April 2022</i>	Archdiocesan staff synthesizes parish responses and submits them to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB). A summary of all North American responses is presented to the General Secretariat for Synod of Bishops in Rome
<i>September 2022</i>	General Secretariat releases the first working document for the synod gathering, based in part on diocesan responses
<i>October 2022 to March 2023</i>	North American bishops study working document and send feedback to General Secretariat
<i>June 2023</i>	General Secretariat releases second draft of working document and sends to participants of the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops
<i>October 2023</i>	Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome

Synod Prayer

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*, meaning, “We stand before You, Holy Spirit.” This prayer has been historically used at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, being attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560-4 April 636). As we are called to embrace this synodal path of the Synod 2021-2023, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to operate within us so that we may be a community and a people of grace. For the Synod 2021-2023, we propose to use this simplified version, so that any group or liturgical assembly can pray more easily.

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.

Praying with Scripture

Scripture Passage

Acts of the Apostles 2: 1-8, 11b

¹ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ¹¹ In our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."

Sharing (20 minutes)

Share with your group any new insights from this passage you have, or anything that struck you from what you heard from other people.

Journeying Together

Personal Reflection (10 minutes)

The passage from Acts 1 tells the story of Pentecost and the beginnings of the Church. In the early Church, Christians “were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common” (Acts 4:32). They lived, journeyed, shared their faith, and learned together. For important decisions, such as selection of Matthias as replacement for Judas (Acts 1:12-26), the people were consulted and asked for input. They were not asked to vote – the final decision was discerned through prayer, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But their voices were heard. In this way, early Christians experienced a powerful feeling of community and inclusion – or what we might call “journeying together,” or “synodality.” Synodality is still meant to be a central theme and principle of our Church, but we know it is not always lived out perfectly. This synodal process that we are undertaking asks us to reflect on whether we feel that, in our own *personal experience to date*, our voices have been heard and valued, and whether we feel that we are a part of a larger community that is “of one heart and soul.”

Reflection Questions

1. Can you think of an example of when you felt that you were “*journeying together*” with a group or community in your local Church?
 - a. **If so**, how did that make you feel? Were there specific processes, people, or circumstances that helped you to feel united and valued in the group?
 - b. **If not**, why do you think that is? What would have to happen for you, personally, to feel part of a community that is genuinely united in mission and purpose? What would make you feel that you, your voice, and your contributions were welcomed and valued?

