



Theme 1 - Communion

Who is this guide for?

- This guide can be used by individuals or, ideally, self-formed groups to engage with the Synodal questions without joining one of the official Parish groups.
- Groups could encounter each other in person, online or by phone – whatever works for you.
- There are three sets of questions, so you could think about them over three sessions or one longer one – again, whatever works for you. Each set of questions is likely to take between 20 and 30 minutes.
- Once you have completed all three themes (this one on ‘communion’, then ‘participation’ and ‘mission’) you can submit your summary to the Diocese. We also hope that you will share it with us for inclusion in the official Parish response.

How does it work?

- Each session begins with a short liturgy. It is important to be aware that everything we do is done in the presence of God and made better through acknowledging his presence. The liturgy also links to the theme.
- There are three sets of questions unpicking the theme. There is space for you to record your considered thoughts. If you use the Word version of this guide, you can type these in the space provided. The pdf version is intended to be printed and completed by hand.
- There is no need for a group to reach a consensus. Your written summary can reflect a diversity of views.
- Each set of questions ends with a statement for you to respond to, indicating to what extent you agree or disagree with it. Individuals can simply put in a cross in the appropriate box; groups can add the number of people giving each response.
- Once you have finished all the questions, finish with a time of prayer.

Encounter – listen – discern

Follow the encounter–listen–discern model. This is trickier if you are using this guide on your own, but discuss the issues raised by the questions with others you meet (in an appropriate way) and reflect carefully on what you hear.

Remember these two important principles:

- We listen to one another in order to listen to the Holy Spirit.
- We discern together so that the decisions made are for the good of all.

The aim of your discussions is to listen to each other’s experiences and reflections, with the aim of hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit. Last September, Pope Francis said this about the Synod: ‘It’s not about gathering opinions, no. This is not a survey, but about listening to the Holy Spirit.’

Guidelines for using the questions

The following suggestions will help you to use the questions most effectively:

- Don't feel you need to answer all the questions – focus on those that are most meaningful to you.
- Be yourself – talk from the heart about your personal experiences.
- There are no right or wrong answers.
- Encourage each other (even if you don't always agree).
- Don't be afraid of silence – silence is useful time to reflect about what we have heard or, simply, time to think.
- Respect each other.
- Everyone's voice needs to be heard.
- Listen actively – allow yourself to be challenged, surprised, or even shocked.
- Try to cover all areas for discussion in each section.

Liturgy

Opening prayer

**Lord, the Word who is Life,
may all the people of our Diocese
grow in openness to the power of the Holy Spirit,
so that through a growth in understanding and courage,
and truly open to your call,
we may bear powerful witness to all around us,
for you are Lord for ever and ever. Amen.**

THE
WORD
WHO
IS
LIFE

Gospel reading

A reading from the Gospel of Luke.

Now on that same day, two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognising him.

And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?'

He asked them, 'What things?'

They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us.

They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him.'



Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then

beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening, and the day is now nearly over.' He went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

After the Gospel, pause for a while for silent prayer and reflection.

Lord, we thank you for bringing us together
to reflect on the joy of your love and how we, as your people,
can work together to share your joy and peace with others.
We ask you to guide our conversation and all the conversations taking place across the world.
We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Discussion 1 - Journeying Companions

The first discussion is about those who form our parish community as we journey together. The questions are:

- Who makes up our parish community?
- Which people or groups are on the edges of our parish community?
- Whom do we know who no longer walks with us, those who used to and now we don't see?
- How do we engage with those for whom the experience of Covid has prompted thoughts about faith (positive and negative)?
- How do we welcome people?

Response to questions about 'Journeying Companions':

The Church is good at accompanying people on their journey of faith.					
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree

Discussion 2 - Listening

The next discussion prompts us to think about how good we are at listening to each other. The questions are:

- Do we listen to each other?
- How do we best do this – people to people, clergy to clergy, bishops to bishops?
- How do we deepen our listening, making it a ‘a listening of the heart’ and not just of the issues and subjects at hand?
- How do we ensure that the Church responds to the culture and needs of society?

Response to questions about ‘Listening’:					
The Church is good at heart-to-heart listening.					
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree

Discussion 3 - Speaking Out

The final discussion is about communication, both within our Parish and with the outside world. The last set of questions are:

- What is the communication like in our Parish & Diocese?
- Do we have the freedom to speak freely, openly, and respectfully?
- How am I living out my Christian life?

Response to questions about ‘Speaking Out’:					
The Church is good at communication.					
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree

Final prayer

We have a few moments to bring everything we have discussed to God. We give thanks for all the good that our Parish has done and continues to do, but we also pray for the strength and guidance that will allow us to grow as a community. I invite you now, either out loud or in the silence of your heart, to offer a prayer for any of the topics that we have discussed today.

Allow people to offer prayers or simply have a period of silent prayer.

We gather all our prayers, both spoken and unspoken, and offer them to you Father, using the words our saviour gave us...

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day, our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil. Amen.**

St Philip Howard... **Pray for us.**

Our Lady Seat of Wisdom... **Pray for us.**

St Joseph... **Pray for us.**

All Holy men and women... **Pray for us.**

Sign of the cross