



Theme 2 – Participation

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 four sets of questions, so you could think about them over four short 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 is the second, the first is on ‘communion’ and the third on ‘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 four 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 a cross in the appropriate box; groups can add the number of people giving each response.
- Once you have finished all the questions, end 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.**

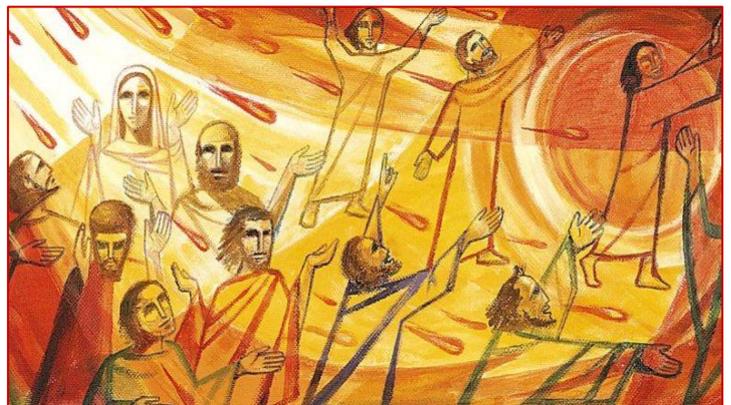
THE
WORD
WHO
IS
LIFE

Scripture reading

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 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. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

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



The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

After the reading, 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 4 - Celebrating

The first discussion for this theme (and fourth overall) is about the quality of our prayer life, including Mass and other liturgies. There is also a focus on what flows from our prayer life. The questions are:

- Do our celebrations in Church inspire a deeper encounter with the risen Lord?
- How does my prayer – both individually and in my community – enable my participation in the mission of the Church?
- Is the Eucharist the centre of mine, and my community's life?
- What flows from the Sunday (or daily) Eucharist, from our communities into the world?
- What do I give thanks to God for in prayer? What do I seek from him?

Response to questions about 'Celebrating':

The Church is good at celebrating the depth and breadth of our faith.					
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree

Discussion 5 - Co-responsibility in the Mission

The next discussion focuses on our duty through baptism to active participation in the mission of the Church. How does the Parish and Diocese support us in this task? The questions are:

- Do I understand the mission of the Church – in my own life, in the local church, and the universal church?
- How do our lives relate to the Great Commission of Jesus? This is found at the end of St Matthew's Gospel: Jesus said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'
- What formation do I need to be more committed to the mission of the Church?
- What impact is our local community making in the area – do we make a difference?

Response to questions about 'Co-responsibility in the Mission':

The Church is good at empowering a sense of Mission.					
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree

Discussion 6 - Dialogue in Church and Society

The next discussion invites us to think about how the Church interacts with the wider world. The questions are:

- How do we understand dialogue (respectful conversation) between Church and the wider Society?
- Do we see dialogue as a unique contribution that the Church can make to the world?
- How do we address the challenges that dialogue brings about?
- How do we begin to dialogue with others?

Response to questions about 'Dialogue in Church and Society':

The Church is good at Dialogue with the wider community.					
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree

Discussion 7 - Other Christian Denominations

The last set of questions are about how well we engage with other Christian denominations:

- What is our relationship with other Christian communities?
- Do we listen to each other as we journey on our pilgrim way?
- What enriches us from other traditions? What do we offer them from ours?

Response to questions about 'Other Christian Denominations':

The Church is good at building relationships with other denominations.					
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