

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
















Mercy Partners acknowledges the traditional owners, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whose wisdom, spirituality and connection with the land continue to enrich Australia's culture and life.

CREDITS

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ABOUT THIS PRAYER RESOURCE

The Synodal way helps us reflect on how we can embody a more synodal approach in our ministry

This prayer resource captures the key elements of synodality while showcasing the processes of spiritual conversation and discernment critical to operating in a synodal way. The resource provides guidance for facilitators on how to use the prayer materials and the processes.

It is important to understand that the facilitator's role is to facilitate, not participate, ensuring a focus on guiding participants through the content and processes in a way that fosters open, reflective, and inclusive conversation.

Some background on synodality, including Pope Francis' emphasis on synodal inclusivity, is available in the introductory section **ABOUT SYNODALITY** on pages 4 to 5. This context will support the facilitator's understanding of the synodal approach, where each voice and wisdom is valued.

Each prayer in this resource includes:

- A reflection on an aspect of the synodal journey
- A focus question
- A discernment, discussion, or reflection process
- A prayer
- A scripture reference

These are all provided in support of spiritual conversations, and this resource provides a variety of methods to guide these spiritual conversations, including:

1. Conversations in the Spirit
 2. Process of Discernment
 3. Lectio Divina
 4. See, Judge, Act Method
 5. Christian Spiritual Discernment
 6. Dadirri - The Art of Deep Listening
 7. Reflection Process
 8. Conversation Method
 9. Ignatian Discernment Examen
 10. Franciscan Discernment
- Each prayer uses a unique

process, and the resource includes a facilitator's guide (p50) to outline each process, along with guidance on prayer and scripture, and space for notes.

With these tools, facilitators can create a meaningful experience for participants, helping them engage deeply in the spirit of synodality through synodal reflections and processes.

WHAT ARE THE SYNODAL PROCESSES USED IN THIS RESOURCE

The descriptions below highlight the unique benefits of each process. We hope that, in the future, leaders can continue to use these processes, selecting those most suitable for their group's specific needs.

1. CONVERSATIONS IN THE SPIRIT

Participants share in a prayerful, respectful atmosphere, allowing time for reflection between each contribution. This method emphasises openness to the Spirit and deep listening.

2. PROCESS OF DISCERNMENT

Involves prayer, silence, and reflection on inner movements (such as peace or unease) as participants consider different options and seek divine guidance.

3. LECTIO DIVINA

Participants read a biblical or non-biblical text multiple times, allowing for moments of meditation, prayer, and contemplation to understand how the passage speaks to their context.

4. SEE, JUDGE, ACT METHOD

Participants observe (see) a situation, reflect on it in light of faith (judge), and consider ways to respond (act), guided by Gospel values.

5. CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

Participants engage in prayer, scripture reflection, and attentive listening to inner feelings (consolation or desolation) and signs, aiming to align their decisions with God's guidance. This method often involves consultation with spiritual mentors or communal discernment to confirm insights.

6. DADIRRI – THE ART OF DEEP LISTENING

Participants listen in stillness and patience, honouring each voice and allowing insights to emerge organically over time, promoting communal harmony and understanding.

7. REFLECTION PROCESS

Participants reflect on their personal experiences or group discussions, often through journaling or quiet contemplation, identifying spiritual lessons or calls to action.

8. CONVERSATION METHOD

Participants take turns to share their thoughts on a topic without interruption, followed by a period of silent reflection. This fosters mutual respect and deep listening.

9. IGNATIAN DISCERNMENT EXAMEN

Participants engage in a series of reflective steps, such as gratitude, review of actions, and seeking guidance, to discern God's will and direction in their lives.

10. FRANCISCAN DISCERNMENT

Participants consider how their choices impact others, the environment, and their faith journey, aiming for actions that align with humility, compassion, and service.

ABOUT SYNODALITY

Pope Francis has called upon the global Church to journey towards leadership that is open, co-responsible, and guided by the Holy Spirit.

The prayer resource will focus on key ideas to support ministry leaders in their role of co-creating a shared, co-responsible Church.

With its focus on synodality, this resource fosters both formation for ministry leaders and solidarity with the Church. Synodality reflects an inclusive, empowering, and outward-focused vision of being Church. Inspired by Pope Francis' call for open, co-responsible leadership guided by the Holy Spirit, we aim to encourage ministry leaders to integrate this ethos into their planning, processes, and daily interactions.

Synod is a Greek word (synodos) meaning a meeting or assembly. The two Greek words that make up synod are *syn* meaning together and *hodos* meaning way or journey. Pope Francis' vision for the future marks a revolutionary shift in the Church's structure by broadening the synodal process to include not only bishops but also a greater involvement of lay people. This inclusive approach fosters a more collaborative and participatory Church, reflecting the diverse voices and experiences of the faithful in shaping the Church's mission and direction.

The Synod on Synodality has built upon:

the Second Vatican Council which, in fact, [is] like a seed sown in the field of the world and the Church ... The Synod 2021-2024 continues to draw on the energy of that seed and to develop its potential. The synodal path is, in fact, implementing what the Council taught about the Church as Mystery and People of God, called to holiness (A Synodal Church in Mission, Synthesis Report 2024).

The Synod on Synodality (2021-2024) produced a final document titled, *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*, inviting all to walk together, as Pope Francis states:

The Church is called to be a place of communion, a place where all can contribute, listen, and discern together.

This invitation calls us to journey in unity, sharing in the mission of the Church as one body, united in purpose and spirit (synod.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/ENG-final-document-Synod-2021-24.pdf).

A SYNODAL TIMELINE

Since the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis has prioritised the synodal process, actively seeking the wisdom of all. The 2023-2024 Synod marks a key milestone, as lay people were granted voting rights, significantly enhancing their involvement in the Church's decision-making. This timeline outlines this development:

- **1965:** Pope Paul VI establishes the Synod of Bishops to sustain the consultative spirit of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65)
- **2014-2015:** Pope Francis holds two Synods on the Family, emphasising synodality as essential to the Church
- **2016:** *Amoris Laetitia* issued on family pastoral care
- **2018:** *Episcopalis Communio* grants teaching authority to the Synod. Youth and Vocation Synod held
- **2019:** Amazon Synod discusses ecological issues, married priests, and female deacons
- **2020:** Pope issues *Querida Amazonia* in response to the Amazon Synod
- **2021:** Synod on Synodality begins; Sister Nathalie Becquart becomes first female Synod Undersecretary
- **2022:** Synod findings call for Church reforms; Pope extends Synod process to 2023 and 2024
- **2023-2024:** Women and laypeople receive voting rights at the Synod; topics include Church power and female ordination (www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2023-10/synod-testimony-of-bishop-shane-mackinlay-australia.html)

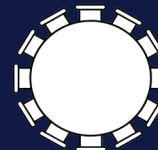
THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

The Fifth Plenary Council of Australia (2018–2022), which involved 277 delegates, contributed to the Synod on Synodality in Rome by offering a practical example of synodality in action. The council emphasised deep listening, discernment, and “conversations in the spirit,” an Ignatian practice used to foster open and collaborative dialogue. These methods of engaging with diverse perspectives and navigating complex issues within the Church mirrored the approach later adopted in the global Synod on Synodality.

Additionally, the Australian experience of synodality highlighted key themes relevant to the wider Church, such as the role of women, inclusivity, and broader participation by laypeople.

These priorities echoed in the Synod on Synodality, helping to shape discussions in Rome about how the global Church can embrace a more synodal way of functioning, with shared decision-making and greater involvement of the laity.

Fr. Gerald O'Collins, a renowned Jesuit scholar, contrasted the static feel of the conciliar era with synodality, which he described as a “pilgrimage.” He urged both Australia and Rome to leave their comfort zones and engage with the world, marking the true start of the synodal journey (www.ncronline.org/vatican/view-vatican/understand-romes-synod-bishops-look-australia).





WHY ARE WE ON THE SYNODAL JOURNEY?

Pope Francis has called on the Catholic Church to become more synodal - open and inclusive of all.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING REFLECTIONS ON SYNODALITY

The language of 'synodality' is unfamiliar to most people. Its Greek

roots mean journeying together. Pope Francis has described synodality as

... an expression of the Church's nature, form, style and mission... and a place where ... all can feel at home and participate.

Rather than a new Church doctrine or polity, it is an ecclesial sensibility: a willingness to listen, dialogue, share, so all the faithful might assume their co-responsibility for

the mission. It requires a prayerful and humble openness to the Holy Spirit being the principal protagonist (*Synodality in Practice*, Anthony Fisher OP Nov 202. Walking Together in Communion, Participation and Mission - Reflections on the Synod on Synodality).

Synodality is not an organisational process but a fundamental ecclesiology. The ecclesial vision of synodality calls for a change of attitude and culture within the Church in Australia so that all persons are welcomed and recognised ... (ACBC. *How is God Calling Us*. 4).

Sixty years after the Second Vatican Council, the Church has decisively moved beyond collegiality to include the laity. Pope Francis has engaged an ecclesiological gearshift with regard to the understanding of revelation and the transmission of faith. He has enabled the *Sensus Fidelium* to come to the fore and to reenergise the life of the Church. The laity are not mere recipients but active participants in the task of discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit, the direction of the Church (Dr Myriam Wijlens, Free Public Lecture, Parramatta. 2024).

...full of wonder and gratitude for the wealth that the Spirit gives to the Church, ... we are called to focus our gaze, or rather to discern together where to turn it, indicating possible paths of growth along which to invite the Churches to walk. The aim is that those riches do not remain locked in a chest, but enter into the circuit of exchange of gifts that nourishes the communion of the Church as a whole.

Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich
<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2024-10/synodal-cardinal-hollerich-opening-speech-full-text.html>

Use the Conversation in the Spirit process to consider the following question:

What do you see as the benefits and the challenges of synodality for the Church and its ministries in Australia?

WHAT IS A CONVERSATION IN THE SPIRIT?

Conversation in the Spirit is the process used at the synodal assemblies in Rome. This process fosters a spiritual environment where decisions and discussions are not simply transactional but are guided by reflection, mutual respect, and attentiveness to God's will. The process invites the Holy Spirit to be part of the conversation and discernment.

Conversation in the Spirit is a tool that, even with its limitations, enables authentic listening in order to discern what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. Its practice has elicited joy, awe and gratitude and has been experienced as a path of renewal that transforms individuals, groups, and the Church. The word "conversation" expresses more than mere dialogue: it interweaves thought and feeling, creating a shared vital space (A Synodal Church in Mission Synthesis Report 2023).

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*Behold,
I am doing a new thing;
now it springs forth,
do you not perceive it?
I will make a way
in the wilderness and
rivers in the desert*

Isaiah 43:19.



THE PROCESS OF CONVERSATION OF THE SPIRIT

The facilitator ensures that the participants are sitting comfortably in groups of between 4 and 6 people.

Step 1: All participants are invited to consider the question which has been posed to the group (2 minutes).

Step 2: Participants are then invited to speak for 1 minute, sharing their response to the question.

There should be no comments or questions while each participant shares. The focus is on listening intently to each speaker. Participants may speak for no more than a minute.

Step 3: The facilitator leaves 1 minute after each sharing before inviting the next participant to speak.

There should be no discussion during this time.

Participants are invited to consider what they heard and what the Spirit is sending to them for their consideration.

Step 4: When each participant has shared, the facilitator invites general discussion on the question.

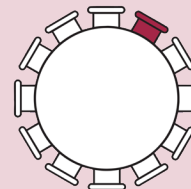
Some questions to consider are:

- What did I hear in the group?
- What particularly resonated with me in the sharing?
- Was there a common thread or direction in what I heard?
- What insights have I gained from this conversation?

The facilitator then finishes the time of spiritual conversation with a prayer:

*Holy Spirit,
You are with us
in our conversations.
Be always on our lips,
in our minds and
in our hearts.
Lead us into harmony
with each other and
open us to Your wisdom.
May we encounter You
in the words of those
gathered here.
May we recognise You
in our encounters
with one another.
Amen.*

(adapted from
Paparella 2023. SL Media)



The key principles of a spiritual conversation:

- Listen actively and attentively
- Listen to each person without judgment
- Listen to the words, tone and also the non-verbal aspects each participant's sharing

(Synod of Bishops. For a Synodal Church).

USE THIS PAGE TO MAKE NOTE OF ANY WORDS, PHRASES OR THOUGHTS SIGNIFICANT FOR YOU

What did I hear in the group?

What particularly resonated with me in the sharing?

Was there a common thread or direction in what I heard?

What insights have I gained from this conversation?

[illegible]



WHAT TYPE OF JOURNEY ARE WE ON AS A CHURCH?

The Synodal journey is new and revolutionary in its call for commitment to walking together.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING REFLECTIONS ON SYNODALITY

A historical consciousness of ecclesial development demonstrates that the Church has evolved across two millenia and has constantly been engaging with new and expanding horizons ... **the Plenary Council is not starting from scratch; it is a movement along the pathway of a pilgrim church that is already on the move even if we feel that we have become paralysed** (Mellor. A. Australasian Catholic Record. 98/4. 2021. 434).

In October 2021, Pope Francis launched the synod titled *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission*, urging bishops to encourage the people of God under their care to actively engage in the process. This marked a significant shift in two ways. First, the Pope didn't simply invite bishops to reflect on synodality; he called them to involve the entire Church. Second, the synodal journey began at the grassroots level, with the focus on empowering the people of God — not top-down directives from

Rome, but a transformation that made the faithful active protagonists in the process (Dr Myriam Wijlens, Free Public Lecture, Parramatta).

The synod experience allows us to walk together not just in spite of our differences, but seeking the truth and taking on the richness of the polar tensions at stake.

Many breakthroughs have happened in councils and assemblies throughout the Church's history. But what matters most is the harmony that enables us to move forward together on the same path, even with all our shades of difference.

This synodal approach is something our world now needs badly. Rather than seeking confrontation, declaring war, with each side hoping to defeat the other, we need processes that allow differences to be expressed, heard, and left to mature in such a way that we can walk together without needing to destroy anyone. This is hard work; it needs patience and commitment – above all to each other (Pope Francis: Let us Dream. 82-83).

Use the Process of
Discernment to consider:

**What questions do you
have about the Church in
Australia today?**

**Where would you
like to see the Church
embracing 'newness'?
Where can you embrace
newness in your ministry?**

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF DISCERNMENT?

Discernment as a spiritual exercise

Discernment processes come in many guises but at their heart is the invitation for participants to come to a deeper understanding of issues and ideas in relation to their own lives, work and belief systems. Spiritual discernment processes acknowledge the place of the Holy Spirit in participants' reflection and understanding of where God is calling them to be as God's people today.

Discernment can be seen as a gift from God, strengthening us with the gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge and piety.

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*Then he sat down and
taught the crowds from
the boat. When he had
finished speaking,
he said to Simon,
“Put out into the deep
water and let down
your nets for a catch.”*

Luke 5:4-5.



THE PROCESS OF DISCERNMENT

Step 1: All participants are invited to read the stimulus materials and to consider the questions in light of what they have read.

Step 2: The facilitator asks participants to share what questions the material has raised for them or any new knowledge or awareness they have gained. Use the Spiritual Conversation Model to give each participant 1 minute to speak without interruption, followed by 30 seconds of reflective silence.

Step 3: The facilitator invites participants to suggest how any new understandings of the topic can be applied to the way in which the ministry/team/board operates or sees its place in God's mission in the evolving church.

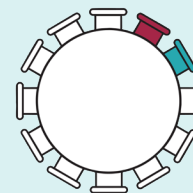
Step 4: The facilitator gathers these suggestions in prayer.

Finish with a prayer

*God of the Journey
Be with us as we journey
forward as a ministry and
as a people of God.
Give us the wisdom of your
Spirit so that we might see
and hear your call to be
people of faith, justice
and compassion.
In the gifts you
have given us
and in the encounters
and experiences
of our daily lives,
may we seek always
to build inclusive,
welcoming and forward
looking communities.
Amen.*

The key principles of the process of discernment:

- Prayer and inner reflection
- Awareness of inner movements (peace or discomfort)
- Seeking guidance and wisdom
- Patience and confirmation



USE THIS PAGE TO MAKE NOTE OF ANY WORDS, PHRASES OR THOUGHTS SIGNIFICANT FOR YOU

How does this material connect with or challenge our mission and values?

What needs or opportunities does this material highlight for us?

How can we put these new insights into action?

How might these insights give us a stronger sense of purpose in our work?

[illegible]



WHO IS LEADING THE WAY?

Synodality is a Spirit-led journey of listening, conversion, and communal discernment in faith.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING REFLECTIONS ON SYNODALITY

Synodality is a “spiritual event,” process of hearing the Holy Spirit speaking to the churches, through humble listening and prayerful discernment.

Used as a weapon for forcing change of Church teaching or order, synodality would cease to be a true journeying with each other and with God (Synodality in Practice, Anthony Fisher OP Nov 2023, Walkin Together in Communion, Participation and Mission - Reflections on the Synod on Synodality).

What characterises a synodal path is the role of the Holy Spirit. We listen, we discuss in groups, but above all we pay attention to what the Spirit has to say to us. That is why I ask everyone to speak frankly and to listen carefully to others because, there, too, the Spirit is speaking. Open to changes and new possibilities, the Synod is for everyone an experience of conversion. Hence one of the changes in the process: periods of silence between speeches allow those in attendance to be better aware of the motions of the Spirit (Pope Francis, Let us Dream p85).

In this conversation of the Spirit ... we have listened to one another and above all, in the rich variety of our backgrounds and concerns, we have listened to the Holy Spirit. Today we do not see the full fruit of this process, but with farsightedness we look to the horizon opening up before us. The Lord will guide us and help us to be a more synodal and missionary Church, a Church that adores God and serves the women and men of our time, going forth to bring to everyone the consoling joy of the Gospel (Pope Francis. <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2023/documents/20231029-omelia-conclusion-sinodo.html>).

Discernment must be carried out in a space of prayer, meditation, reflection and study, which we need to hear the voice of the Spirit; by means of sincere, serene and objective dialogue with our brothers and sisters...

Paragraph 114, International Theological Commission's document on synodality.

Use the process of *Lectio Divina* to consider the following questions:

What word or phrase most resonated with you from the readings?

What does it mean to say that the synodal process is being led by the Holy Spirit?

WHAT IS *LECTIO DIVINA*?

Lectio Divina is an ancient form of reflection on the scriptures. It can also be used to reflect, prayerfully, on any passage of spiritual text. *Lectio Divina* and different spiritual traditions, ancient and recent, can certainly offer much to the practice of discernment. Indeed, it is appropriate to value the plurality of forms and styles, methods and criteria that the Holy Spirit has suggested over the centuries and that are part of the Church's spiritual language (A Synodal Church in Mission Synthesis Report 2023).

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For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

If we live
by the Spirit,
let us also walk
by the Spirit

Galatians 5:35.



THE PROCESS OF LECTIO DIVINA/SACRED READING

The following process allows participants to reflect on a reading in a group reflection situation:

Step 1: Ask participants to slowly and meditatively read (*lectio*) the material presented and to listen for a particular word or phrase that speaks to them and to sit with this word for a time.

Step 2: Then invite participants to meditate (*meditatio*) by reading the same passage a second time. Ask participants to re-engage the text and to let the word or phrase that

stood out become their invitation to deeper focus on what God is calling them to consider at this time.

Step 3: Participants are then asked to pray (*oratio*) by reading the text a third time and prayerfully considering the following questions:

- What is God saying to you in these words?
- What feelings do these words raise up in you?

Step 4: In the final stage participants are invited to contemplation (*contemplatio*) by reading the text for a final time.

Ask:

- What gift has God given you to take away from this prayer?
- To what action might God be inviting you?

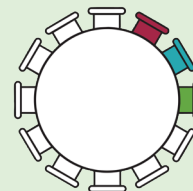
Step 5: Participants share as a group their insights from the process of *Lectio Divina*

Finish the *Lectio Divina* with a prayer

*Holy Spirit of Love,
Guide us in our work for
your mission in the world
and embolden us —
to speak the truth
even when this is
not welcome,
**to stand up for the
vulnerable and
marginalised**
even when this is unpopular,
**to build communities of
compassion and mercy**
in the face of greed
and indifference,
to be shining lights of love
in the dark places
of our world.
Amen.*

The key principles of Lectio Divina:

- *Lectio* (Reading):
- *Meditatio* (Meditation)
- *Oratio* (Prayer)
- *Contemplatio* (Contemplation)



USE THIS PAGE TO MAKE NOTE OF ANY WORDS, PHRASES OR THOUGHTS SIGNIFICANT FOR YOU

What word or phrase resonates with you, and why?

How does this word or phrase relate to your current life?

What feelings or thoughts does this text evoke in you?

What action is God inviting you to take from this reflection?

[illegible]



WHO IS WALKING WITH US?

Synodality reveals the importance of diversity and solidarity for a just, inclusive Church.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING REFLECTIONS ON SYNODALITY

We understood, in fact, that walking together as baptised persons, in the diversity of charisms, vocations, and ministries, is important not only for our communities, but also for the world. Evangelical solidarity is like a lamp, which must not be placed under a bushel, but on a lampstand so that it may shed light on the whole house (cf. Mt 5:15) (*Introduction a Synodal Church Mission*, 2023).

To be faithful to our heritage scripturally and doctrinally means to respect the dignity of each human person, male and female. To follow Jesus means to be committed to living out just relationships in the Church and in the world. To become the kind of church God invites us to be means to work in solidarity with the poor, the rich, the sinners, with persons of distinction (Elizabeth Johnson, *The Church Women Want*, p.21).

It is hard to build a culture of encounter, in which we meet as people with a shared dignity, within a throwaway culture which regards the elderly, the unemployed, the disabled, and the unborn as surplus to our well-being. ... Before discussing how we can overcome some of the breaches and divisions in our society to build peace and the common good, we need to consider the isolated conscience, which acts as a major obstacle to the union of hearts and minds (Pope Francis, *Let us Dream*, p.69).

We are not just here to listen and give advice, but to be part of the process. Women must be fully included, not only in leadership but in decision-making at all levels. The Church must be a place where all voices are heard, and that includes those who have been on the margins for far too long.

Sister Nathalie Becquart,
Undersecretary of the Synod of
Bishops

Use the See-Judge-Act method of spiritual conversation to consider the following question:

How can you build a culture of encounter and inclusion in your ministry, board or leadership team?

WHAT IS THE SEE - JUDGE - ACT METHOD?

See – Judge – Act as a process of group discernment is designed to help groups or individuals identify and name significant issues or trends impacting a ministry, to bring theological reflection to those issues through analysis, and to propose changes or new approaches to redirect or reimagine a more open and inclusive future. This process is a simple, yet effective way of stopping and reflecting before making decisions or engaging challenges and concerns. First promoted by Belgian Cardinal Joseph Cardijn and later endorsed in Catholic practice by Pope John XXIII in his encyclical *Mater et Magistra* 1961, the process allows the social message of the Gospel to be engaged in contemporary discernment processes.

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For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

*I came
that they
may have life
and have it
abundantly*

John 10:10.



THE PROCESS OF SEE-JUDGE-ACT

For each section consider the question as a group.

Pause for reflection. Share insights or ideas.

SEE

As a group consider:

- **Who is involved in decision-making in your ministry?**
- Are the voices around the table a reflection of the diversity of the ministry or the community more broadly?
- How does your ministry walk with others in working for the Common Good?

JUDGE

As a group consider:

- **What guidance does Pope Francis give us in the extracts about building cultures of encounter and inclusion?**
- What values from Catholic Social Teaching can guide our discernment?

ACT

As a group consider:

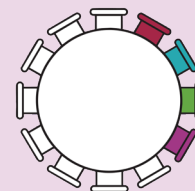
- **What can this group do moving forward to ensure that we build bridges for all to be more involved and engaged in our communities?**
- How can this ministry walk with others in local and national church bodies to ensure more inclusive structures?

Finish with a prayer

*God of the journey,
Be with us as we walk
together in a synodal
community.
Help us to ask the difficult
questions about inclusion
and power sharing.
Enable us to stand in
solidarity with all in our
communities.
Encourage us to reach
out to the marginalised
and excluded.
May we strive always to
build communities of love.
Amen.*

The key principles of the See-Judge-Act process:

- Inclusivity of all voices
- Theological reflection through the lens of faith and Catholic Social Teaching
- Community engagement
- Action-oriented reflection



USE THIS PAGE TO MAKE NOTE OF ANY WORDS, PHRASES OR THOUGHTS SIGNIFICANT FOR YOU

How can we ensure all voices are included in decision-making?

How does the Gospel's message prompt us to change our practices?

What Catholic Social Teaching values can guide our inclusivity efforts?

What concrete steps can we take to enhance community outreach?

[illegible]



WHO IS MISSING ON THE JOURNEY?

Synodality highlights the tension between tradition and the need for inclusivity within the Church.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING REFLECTIONS ON SYNODALITY

For some, it is defined by its ancient traditions and devotions, its inherited structures and language, the Church we have grown up with and love. It gives us a clear Christian identity. For others, the present Church does not seem to be a safe home. It is experienced as exclusive, marginalising many people: women, the divorced and remarried. For some it is too Western, too Eurocentric (Radcliffe. 2023).

Only when we listen to the voices that are often not heard, can we grow and discern. We wish especially to hear the voices of specific groups within the Church: the poor people, the marginalised people, those who feel left out or not welcome, the LGBTQ community, divorced and remarried people, migrants, and people whose lives did not turn out as they hoped... (For a Synodal Church in a European Perspective. 2023).

... the Church has not been able, always and everywhere, “to effectively reach out to the poor on the peripheries” — not only the destitute, but also the lonely elderly, indigenous people, migrants, street children, alcoholics and drug addicts, victims of trafficking, survivors of abuse, prisoners, groups who suffer discrimination and violence because of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality (<https://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/news/2022-10/ing-043/presentation-of-the-continental-stage-of-the-synod.html>).

I dream of a missionary option, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation

(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*).

Use the notes on using a discernment lens to discuss the following question:

Whose voices are not heard in your ministry?

As leaders, how can you invite the excluded into your ministry?

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT?

Discernment refers to the process of making informed judgments by assessing the moral, spiritual, cultural, social and generational context of each situation. The understanding that there are many ways or lenses to look through when making a decision or contemplating a way forward is the basis of Christian spiritual discernment.

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For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

*Enlarge the place
of your tent,
stretch your tent
curtains wide,
do not hold back;
lengthen your cords.
Strengthen your stakes.*

Isaiah 54:1.



THE PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

Step 1: The facilitator poses the questions to the participants after reading the source material.

- What insights might your founding charism bring to our discernment as leaders?

Step 2: Then the facilitator can choose one of the following questions or assign a separate question to participants in small groups for shared discussion:

- What wisdom and experience might indigenous people bring to our leadership?
- What are the moral implications of implicit or explicit exclusion in ministry leadership and organisation?
- What are the social implications of not addressing those whose voices are missing in our ministries?

- What would a generational lens – the experience of younger generations – contribute to your decision-making?

Step 3: The facilitator invites participants to discuss the benefits of including different voices in any leadership discussion or reflection.

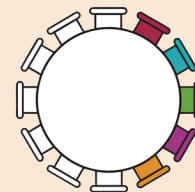
Step 4: The facilitator leads discussion on the learnings and blessings that diversity brings.

Finish with a prayer

*Challenge us God
of unity and compassion
to widen the tents
of our ministries
to include the
marginalised and
forgotten,
those who are voiceless;
those who are isolated
and alone.
Help us
to always be
people of inclusion
and welcome.
Amen.*

The key principles of Christian Spiritual Discernment

- Inclusivity
- Listening and Engagement
- Moral Responsibility
- Gospel Guidance



USE THIS PAGE TO MAKE NOTE OF ANY WORDS, PHRASES OR THOUGHTS SIGNIFICANT FOR YOU

What wisdom can indigenous perspectives offer to enhance our leadership practices?

How does our founding charism shape our understanding of inclusion in leadership?

What are the consequences of excluding certain voices in our ministry, and how can we address this?

In what ways can the insights of younger generations inform our decision-making processes?

[illegible]



HOW DO WE WALK TOGETHER?

Synodality calls for a Church that listens deeply, fostering mutual trust and openness to the Spirit.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING REFLECTIONS ON SYNODALITY

We need a respectful, mutual listening, free of ideology and predetermined agendas.

The aim is not to reach agreement by means of a contest between opposing positions, but to journey together to seek God's will, allowing differences to harmonise (Pope Francis, *Let us Dream*, 93).

... today more than ever we need men and women who, on the basis of their experience of accompanying others, are familiar with the processes which call for prudence, understanding, patience...

We need to practise the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing.

Listening, in communication, is an openness of heart, which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur (Pope Francis, *Lead with Humility*, 25).

Synodality starts with hearing from the whole People of God. A Church that teaches must be firstly a Church that listens (Pope Francis, *Let us Dream*, 84).

If the Synod has taught us anything, it is about the cultivation of mutual relationships that consists in respectful and deep listening, mutual trust and learning, and openness to the Holy Spirit (Bishop Vincent Long OFM CONV, Diocese of Parramatta's Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church, 2024 - 2028).

Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we are strengthened by the encounter with Jesus as we embark on the journey of participation, communion and mission.

Vincent Long OFM CONV,
Bishop of Parramatta

Use the principles of Dadirri to discuss the following question:

How can your board or leadership team cultivate deep listening to discern key strategic directions in your ministry?

WHAT IS DADIRRI — THE ART OF DEEP LISTENING?

Dadirri (da-did-ee) is the art of listening, closely and deeply to others. This deep listening is one that needs to be nurtured and developed within ministries and leadership groups.

The indigenous practice of dadirri originates in the Nauiyu Daly River area. Dadirri means deep inner listening in the Ngan'gikurrunggurr language. Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann has taught the principles of dadirri to encourage all Australians to learn from the ancient practices of our land in the art of true listening.

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For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

*Let everyone
be quick to listen,
slow to speak and
slow to anger ...*

James 1:19.



THE PROCESS OF DADIRRI

Dadirri is focused on quiet and still awareness, something which is not easy to achieve in our fast-paced world.

- Use the following process to introduce participants to the art of deep listening.
- Begin by focusing on a reading (invite someone to slowly read the stimulus material).
- Encourage participants to show that they are listening by responding verbally or non-verbally to what is heard.

- Ask participants to respond using no judgement or I-statements – to respond simply to the words and meanings: to achieve this, participants should face the speaker and maintain eye contact, refrain from interruption, listen rather than plan what to say next, try never to impose opinions or solutions.

- Invite participants to share their thoughts and to ask questions of the material presented.

When participants share their responses allow time between speakers for reflection on what is heard.

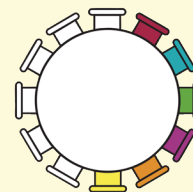
To conclude ask participants to share their feelings about the process of dadirri they have shared and how this might be practised in their ministry.

Finish with a prayer.

*God of the journey,
We thank You
for the gift of listening –
to others and to You.
We ask that You guide us
to continue in the practice
of deep listening,
that we might better hear
Your voice and the needs of
those around us.
May we carry this peace
into our daily lives
and ministries,
being ever-present
to those we serve.
Amen.*

The key principles of Dadirri

- Deep listening
- Quietness and stillness
- Non-judgment
- Humility



USE THIS PAGE TO MAKE NOTE OF ANY WORDS, PHRASES OR THOUGHTS SIGNIFICANT FOR YOU

What stood out to you in the reading or from what others shared?

How did it feel to listen deeply, without judgment or interruption?

How did the silence between words affect your experience?

In what ways can you incorporate the practice of Dadirri into your daily life and ministry?

[illegible]



HOW CAN WE KEEP MOVING FORWARD?

Synodality invites us to listen deeply, embrace closeness, and live in hopeful expectation of God's grace.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING REFLECTIONS ON SYNODALITY

Let us experience this moment of encounter, listening and reflection as a season of grace that, in the joy of the Gospel, allows us to recognise at least three opportunities. First, that of moving not occasionally but structurally towards a synodal Church, an open square where all can feel at home and participate. The Synod then offers us the opportunity to become a listening Church, to break out of our routine and pause from our pastoral concerns in order to stop and listen.

Finally, it offers us the opportunity to become a Church of closeness.

Let us keep going back to God's own "style", which is closeness, compassion and tender love... not only with words, but by a presence that can weave greater bonds of friendship with society and the world (Address by Pope Francis for the opening of the Synod. New Synod Hall. 9 October 2021).

Hope reminds us that there is nothing in life we have not faced that we did not, through God's gifts and graces -however unrecognised at the time – survive. **Hope is the recall of good in the past, on which we base our expectation of good in the future ... hope is not for easy times ...** (Joan Chittister osb. Benetvision. www.joanchittister.org).

God hides in the depths and is not seen, as long as we stay on the surface of anything... the archetypal encounter between doubting Thomas and the Risen Christ (John 20: 19-28) is not really a story about believing in the fact of the Resurrection, but a story about believing that someone could be wounded and also resurrected at the same time! In fact, this might be the primary pastoral message of the whole Gospel (Rohr, R., Everything is Sacred, p.87).

Use the Reflection Process to discuss the following question:

What is your hope for the Church in the future?

How do you bring hope to your ministry as it responds to God's call for a more loving and inclusive world?

WHAT IS THE REFLECTION PROCESS?

The Reflection Process or Mission Discernment Process (Catholic Health Australia, CHA) is a structured approach designed to help organisations, particularly in healthcare, reflect on key issues, make decisions, and guide actions in alignment with Catholic mission and values. This intentional process combines listening, reflection, prayer, and dialogue to ensure decisions are made thoughtfully, in accordance with Catholic moral and spiritual principles. It is both spiritual and practical, involving deepening understanding, discerning the best course of action, and deciding on concrete steps to move forward.

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For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

*May the God of hope
fill you with all joy
and peace as you
trust in God,
so that you may
overflow with hope
by the power of
the Holy Spirit*

Romans 15:13.



THE PROCESS OF REFLECTION

Use the Reflection Process or Mission Discernment Process (CHA) to consider the question of how the synodal process will be sustained into the future.

The facilitator invites participants to share using the following process:

Step 1: LISTEN:

- What did we hear?
- What are the key issues in the readings?

Step 2: DEEPEN:

- What did we learn around the table?
- What are the views of this group?

- How might our understanding of the issue change as we listen to others?

Step 3: DISCERN:

- How can we respond to this issue?
- How do our shared values inform the question?

Step 4: DEEPEN:

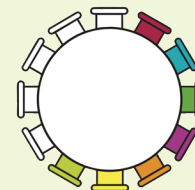
- What more do we need to know?
- Which voices have not been heard?
- Who might be impacted by our decision?

Step 5: DECIDE:

- What actions can we take to build hope for the future of a synodal Church?
- Who and what do we need to implement this decision?
- How can we best communicate this decision?

Finish with a prayer.

God of all time,
we are grateful for the
dreaming,
the courage, the openness
that has brought us
to this place,
this time of now.
May we, with energy
and hope,
embrace the possibilities
you offer us.
May we be ready to listen
and learn, question
and challenge,
imagine and envision anew.
May our hearts hear your
insistent call and
be enlivened by
its promise of
one world,
one sacred community,
one body in
the cosmic Christ.
Amen.



The key principles of the Reflection Process

- Listening
- Deepening
- Discerning
- Deciding

USE THIS PAGE TO MAKE NOTE OF ANY WORDS, PHRASES OR THOUGHTS SIGNIFICANT FOR YOU

What new insights did you hear that you hadn't considered?

How has your understanding of the issue evolved through this discussion?

What actions reflect our shared values and God's will?

What concrete steps can we take, and who needs to be involved?

[illegible]



WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES ON THE SYNODAL PATH?

The Church faces profound change, requiring bold decisions to embrace synodality and adapt to new realities.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING REFLECTIONS ON SYNODALITY

What are the changes impacting Catholic Church and its path to synodality? Allen lists a few of these in *The Future Church*:

- A Church whose primary interreligious relationship ... has been with Judaism now finds itself struggling to come to terms with a newly assertive Islam, ... in its own European backyard.
- A Church that has historically invested a large share of its pastoral energy in the young now has to cope, ... with the most rapidly aging population in human history.
- A Church that has long relied on its clergy to deliver pastoral care and to provide leadership now has lay people doing both in record numbers...
- A Church used to debating bioethical issues ... abortion, birth control, and homosexuality — finds itself in a brave new world of cloning, genetic enhancements, and trans-species chimeras. Its moral teaching is struggling desperately to keep pace with scientific advances.
- A Church whose social teaching took shape in the early stages of the Industrial Revolution now faces a twenty-first-century globalised world ... that didn't exist when it crafted its vision of the just society.
- A Church whose social concern focuses almost exclusively on human beings finds itself in a world in which the welfare of the cosmos itself requires new theological and moral reflection.
- A Church accustomed to thinking of the Christian “other” as the Orthodox, Anglicans, and Protestants today is watching Pentecostals march across the planet (Allen, J, p.2-3).

The journey ahead is littered with choices – to keep taking the risks of change, to keep climbing the mountain of grace, to keep leaving what is not nourishing us...

(O'Leary, Unmasking God, 48).

Use the Conversation Method of reflection and focused listening to answer the following question:

Which contextual issues have the most impact on the Church in your area?

What are the main obstacles to synodality in your ministry?

WHAT IS THE CONVERSATION METHOD?

The Conversation Method is a dialogue approach that fosters deep, respectful communication by prioritising listening over speaking. It encourages participants to share their thoughts openly while others listen attentively, without interruption, judgment, or the intent to respond immediately. This method creates a safe space for mutual respect, where each person's voice is valued. It is often used in group settings to promote understanding, explore different perspectives, and reflect collaboratively on issues or experiences. The goal is not to debate or persuade, but to engage in a reflective and meaningful exchange that deepens connection and enhances shared insight.

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For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

*This is what the Lord says:
stand at the crossroads
and look;
as for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is,
and walk in it,
and you will find
rest for your souls...*

Jeremiah 6:16.



THE PROCESS OF THE CONVERSATION METHOD

The Conversation or Discussion Method of facilitating a shared understanding is used when a group is faced with details which can impact on a decision.

Step 1: FACTS

The facilitator focuses the participants on a set of facts or figures such as the list of factors impacting the global Catholic Church in John Allan's book. Consider what other socio-cultural issues impact on the expression of the Catholic faith in Australia today?

Step 2: FEELINGS

The facilitator asks the participants what their reactions are to the material presented. What worries you about the material from John Allen? How do you respond to information regarding global change?

Step 3: MEANINGS

The facilitator invites participants to consider the meaning of these changes for their lives and the ministries in which they work.

How will these changes impact on the work of the ministry in the next 5 to 10 years?

Which are the most serious challenges for this community?

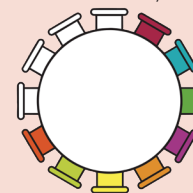
Step 4: ACTIONS/ DECISIONS

The facilitator invites participants to suggest one or two immediate actions to address the issues raised in the conversation. Are there new directions which this group needs to take?

Finish with a prayer

Come, Holy Spirit!
You inspire new tongues
and place words of life
on our lips:
keep us from becoming
a museum Church,
beautiful but mute,
with much past
and little future.
Come among us, so that
in this synodal experience
we will not lose
our enthusiasm,
dilute the power of prophecy,
or descend into useless and
unproductive discussions.
Come, Spirit of love,
open our hearts
to hear your voice!
Come, Holy Spirit of holiness,
renew the holy and faithful
People of God!
Come, Creator Spirit, renew the
face of the earth!
Amen.

(Pope Francis 9/10/2021. Opening Address of the Synod).



The key principles of the Reflection Process

- Listening
- Respectful Sharing
- Reflection
- Action

USE THIS PAGE TO MAKE NOTE OF ANY WORDS, PHRASES OR THOUGHTS SIGNIFICANT FOR YOU

What socio-cultural issues are currently shaping the Catholic faith in Australia?

What concerns or emotions arise when considering global changes impacting the Church?

How will these changes affect the future of our ministry in the next 5-10 years?

What immediate actions can we take to address these challenges and adapt to change?

[illegible]



WHERE MIGHT THE JOURNEY LEAD?

Synodality calls for intergenerational dialogue, lay participation, and a commitment to the common good.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING REFLECTIONS ON SYNODALITY

The call for a synodal Church invites us to consider where the journey might be leading the Church in Australia.

The synodal culture needs to become more intergenerational, with spaces for young people to speak freely for themselves, within their families, and with their peers and pastors, including through digital channels (A Synodal Church in Mission, Synthesis Report 2023).

... the lay faithful contribute in a vital way to advancing that mission in all areas and in the ordinary situations of every day.

Above all, it is they who make the Church present and who proclaim the Gospel, for example, in digital culture, which has such a strong impact throughout the world; in youth culture; in the world of work and business, politics, and the arts and culture; in scientific research, education, and training; in the care of our common home; and especially through participation in public life... in a special way, young people, with their gifts and fragilities,

growing in friendship with Jesus, become apostles of the Gospel to their peers (A Synodal Church in Mission, Synthesis Report 2023).

Christians have a duty to commit themselves to active participation in building up the common good and defending the dignity of life, drawing inspiration from the Church's social doctrine and working together in various ways, through engagement in civil society organisations, trade unions, popular movements, grassroots associations, in the field of politics, and so forth. The Church is deeply grateful for them (A Synodal Church in Mission, Synthesis Report, 2023).

Pope Francis is not afraid to name the problems facing young people in our world, particularly exploitation in all its forms, but he does not dwell on the negatives. He invites young people to take their place as the “now of the church,” working in solidarity to fight evil and live the gift of the “present”

(www.bbcatholic.org.au).

Use the Discernment Examen process to discuss the following question:

What vision do you have of the Church in the future?

How might your ministry contribute to envisioning a new Church?

WHAT IS AN IGNATIAN DISCERNMENT EXAMEN?

A Discernment Examen is a reflective spiritual practice designed to help individuals or groups discern God's will and recognise the movements of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Rooted in Ignatian spirituality (from St. Ignatius of Loyola), the Examen is a way to examine one's thoughts, feelings, and actions, and to discern where God is present or active.

The Examen is typically done at the end of the day but can be practised at any time to discern God's direction in a particular decision or situation. It is a process of self-reflection and prayer that helps individuals identify areas where they may be aligning with or straying from God's desires.

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For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

*At that time Jesus said,
"I praise you, Father,
Lord of heaven and earth,
because you have hidden
these things from the wise
and learned and revealed
them to little children....*

Jeremiah 29:11.



THE PROCESS OF IGNATIAN (COMMUNAL) DISCERNMENT EXAMEN

Rooted in the spirituality of St. Ignatius, this process guides groups through prayer, self-examination, and listening for the Holy Spirit.

The steps include praying for openness, presenting the decision, seeking clarity on feelings of consolation (peace, joy) and desolation (confusion, unrest), and weighing options to sense God's guidance collectively.

Step 1: OPENNESS AND PRESENCE

The facilitator invites the participants to take a moment to be aware of God's presence in the meeting and in their lives more broadly.

Step 2: REFLECTION ON THE QUESTION

The facilitator reads the questions and invites participants to reflect on the materials presented. What excites or challenges you about the future of the Church?

How do you see the Church embracing the digital space?

Step 3: QUESTIONING AND LISTENING

The facilitator encourages listening and sharing of feelings – confusion, fear, hope and excitement.

Step 4: GOING FORWARD

The facilitator reminds participants of God's guidance and that God walks with us in this synodal journey.

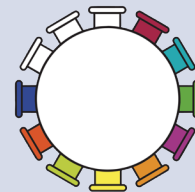
The session finishes with a prayer.

God of the Journey,
Be with us as we travel
the synodal path.
Remind us of your
presence with us
in the challenges
and hopes of
a new way of
being Church.

We ask for your grace
as we seek to serve others
for a better tomorrow.
Amen.

The key principles of a Discernment Examen

- Recognise God's presence
- Grow in spiritual awareness
- Make prayerful decisions
- Promote growth and transformation



USE THIS PAGE TO MAKE NOTE OF ANY WORDS, PHRASES OR THOUGHTS SIGNIFICANT FOR YOU

How can we open ourselves to God's presence in this moment?

What stirs in your heart as we reflect on this issue?

What feelings or insights are emerging as we listen to one another?

How is God inviting us to move forward together?

[illegible]



HOW DO WE STAY ON THE SYNODAL PATH?

Synodality calls for listening, respect, humility, and valuing every person as a unique source of wisdom

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING REFLECTIONS ON SYNODALITY

Listening and conversation in the Spirit are central to the synodal process...

religious orders have something to teach the church about the art of conversation. St. Benedict teaches us to seek consensus; St. Dominic to love debate, St. Catherine of Siena to delight in conversation, and St. Ignatius of Loyola, the art of discernment. St. Philip Neri, the role of laughter ... (Radcliffe, T.).

It's about beginning to understand that every person we meet is a gift of wisdom to us. We have something to learn from each of them. And we have something everyone we meet needs from us: a sense of value, a deep-down respect, a genuine admiration, a recognition of their contribution to the world (Chittister, J. *Radical Spirit*. 192).

As long as we believe some people are more special, more beautiful, more capable, more influential, more gifted, and have a greater capacity for good than others, often based on material possessions and outer appearances, marginalisation will continue unabated (Rupp. *Boundless Companion*. 114).

Contemplation helps us look at the world with a humble attitude accepting that we will never fully know and that there will always be more to see, more to learn, more ways to experience God
(Rohr, R. and Boland, P., 2021, *Everything is Sacred*, p.30).

Use the Franciscan discernment process to discuss the following question:

What practices can you put in place in your ministry to build a synodal culture?

WHAT IS A FRANCISCAN DISCERNMENT PROCESS?

St Francis of Assisi is said to have heard the Crucifix of San Damiano speak the words *Rebuild my Church*.

The Franciscan discernment process is a spiritual approach rooted in the values and spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi. It emphasises the importance of listening to God's voice, practising humility and taking compassionate action when making decisions, particularly in the face of significant life choices or ministry directions. This process is centred around prayer, reflection, and community dialogue, with a focus on seeking God's will through openness, simplicity, and trust in God's guidance.

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For a synodal Church
 communion | participation | mission

*Do not neglect to show
hospitality to strangers,
for thereby some have
entertained angels
unawares ...*

Hebrews 13:2.



THE PROCESS OF FRANCISCAN DISCERNMENT

Franciscan discernment integrates community input, emphasising collective wisdom and a personal response to God's call. In Franciscan communities this process is sometimes referred to as a communal pilgrimage where members journey together in their quest to respond to God's call to live a life in harmony with Franciscan virtues (poverty, humility, peaceful relationships, care for the Earth).

USING THE FRANCISCAN DISCERNMENT MODEL

Step 1: PRAYERFUL LISTENING AND AWARENESS

The facilitator asks participants to take time in silence to listen to God's call through the readings of this reflection.

Step 2: REFLECTIVE UNDERSTANDING

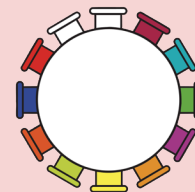
The facilitator invites participants to share their ideas about building a synodal culture.

Step 3: DECISIVE ACTION IN HUMILITY

The facilitator asks participants to agree on three or four practical actions which could be embraced by the group going forward.

The facilitator gathers these ideas into a prayer of commitment.

Merciful God,
Source of goodness,
You show us in
Saint Francis a person
committed to synodality.
Teach us, we pray:
to embrace his love for all
people and all creation,
his compassion for the poor,
and his ability
to inspire others.
May we be inspired by his
words and actions
to rebuild our Church
through the actions
discussed in this meeting
(add the 3-4 commitments).
Amen.



The four key principles of the Franciscan discernment process

- Prayer and Openness to God's Will
- Community and Shared Wisdom
- Simplicity and Humility
- Action and Service

USE THIS PAGE TO MAKE NOTE OF ANY WORDS, PHRASES OR THOUGHTS SIGNIFICANT FOR YOU

What is God calling me to in this situation, and how can I open my heart to God's will?

How can I listen attentively to the voices of others and seek counsel from trusted companions?

What distractions or desires do I need to let go of to discern God's true path?

How can my decision lead to service that reflects God's love and brings peace to others?

[illegible]



IMAGES REFLECTING SYNODALITY

THROUGHOUT THIS
SYNODALITY PRAYER
RESOURCE WE HAVE
USED TWO LOGOS.

The first image is the official logo — **Synod 2021 - 2024: For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission** — was authored by Isabelle Senilhes, a French graphic designer. The official description of the logo refers to the tree which speaks of hope and the cross, a diversity of people who are moving forward together and the brightness of the sun, suggesting new light and direction (<https://www.synod.va/en/news/the-official-logo-of-the-synodal-path.html>).



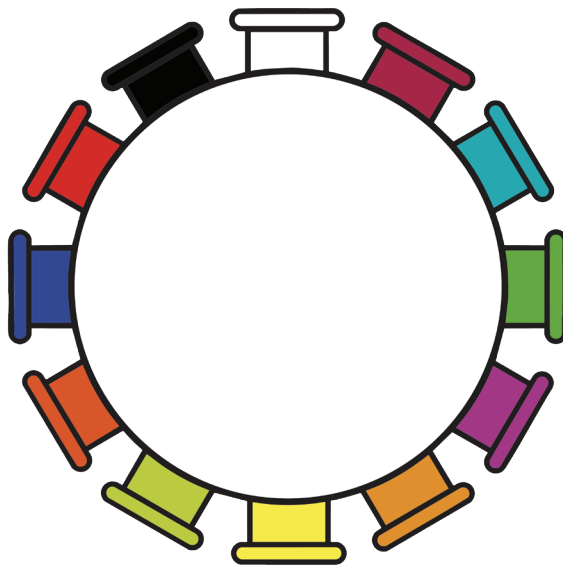
Step 1: Use the reflective prayer technique of Visio Divina to consider what these images say to you.

In silence look at:

- What strikes you about the image?
- What thoughts or feelings the image evokes in you and other messages that you see?

Step 2: Share these with others in the group.

The second image is a round table where everyone is invited to sit, symbolising the inclusivity at the heart of synodality. Each prayer in this resource introduces a new colour representing a new contribution, and set of gifts for the Church — a tapestry of diverse voices working together. To ensure true synodality, an empty chair is also present, representing the voices that are not heard but must be considered in every decision. As Pope Francis urges: *We are called to ensure that the voiceless are heard... to listen to the marginalized, the discarded, the entire periphery of the world* (Address to the General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis, 2019).



THE PROCESS OF VISIO DIVINA

Visio Divina is a contemplative practice that invites you to engage deeply with an image. Find a quiet, distraction-free space and spend time reflecting on the artwork. Examine its details—colors, shapes, mood, and composition—from different angles.

Consider these questions:

- What stands out to you in the image?
- What emotions or thoughts does it evoke?
- Does it convey a particular mood or message?
- How does it connect with your life right now?

Sit in silence with the image, allowing it to open your heart to God's presence and guide you in contemplation.



“IN SEARCH OF A ROUNDTABLE” BY CHUCK LATHROP

Synodality is not an easy path for a Church used to set ways of operating and interacting with the world.

Read the poem by Lathrop - which line or verse sums up your response to synodality? Share with the group.

Concerning the why
and how and what
and who of ministry,
one image keeps surfacing:
A table that is round.
It will take some sawing to be
roundtabled, some redefining
and redesigning
Such redoing and rebirthing
of narrowlong Churching
can painful be for people and
tables
But so was the cross,
a painful too table of giving
and yes
And from such death
comes life, from such dying
comes rising, in search of
roundtabling
And what would roundtable
Churching mean?
It would mean no diasing &
throning,
for but one King is there,
He was a footwasher, at table
no less...
For at narrowlong tables,

servant and mirror
became picture framed and
centers of attention
And crosses became but
gilded ornaments
on bare stone walls
in buildings used but once a
week only
But the times and the
tables are changing and
rearranging
And what of narrowlong table
ministers,
when they confront a
roundtable people,
after years of working up the
table
(as in 'up the ladder')
to finally sit at its head,
only to discover
that the table has turned
around???
Continued rarified air will only
isolate
for there are no people there,
only roles
They must be loved into

roundness,
where apart is spelled a part
and the call is to the gathering
For God has called a People,
not 'them and us'
"Them and us" are unable to
gather around,
for at a roundtable, there are
no sides
And ALL are invited to
wholeness and to food.
At one time
Our narrowing churches
Were built to resemble the
Cross
But it does no good
For building to do so,
If lives do not.
Round tabling means
No preferred seating,
No first and last,
No better, and no corners
For the "least of these".
Roundtabling means no
preferred seating,
no first & last, no better,
no corners for

'the least of these'
Roundtabling means
being with,
a part of,
together,
and one
It means room for the Spirit
and gifts
and disturbing profound
peace for all.
And it is we in the present
who are mixing and kneading
the dough for the future.
We can no longer prepare for
the past.
To be Church,
And if He calls for other than a
round table
We are bound to follow.
Leaving the sawdust
And chips, designs and
redesigns
Behind, in search of and in
presence of
The Kingdom
That is God's and not ours.

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

TO BEGIN EACH PRAYER SESSION INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO READ THE MATERIAL CONTAINED IN EACH SECTION.

The facilitator could say: *Before we begin, let's take a few minutes to read the commentary on the Synod on Synodality, reflecting on how we can embody a more synodal approach in our ministry. This material will guide our reflections as we enter into each process or method.*

This invitation encourages participants to focus on the material's relevance to their discussion.



CONVERSATIONS IN THE SPIRIT

Opening Prayer

Let us begin with prayer:

Step 1: Invitation to Reflect

(2 minutes)

Please take a moment to reflect on the question we've been given. Think about it in light of the material we've read and your own experience. Let's take two minutes of quiet reflection.

Step 2 : Individual

Sharing (1 minute each)

Now, we will each have one minute to share our responses. Please listen closely and attentively to each person, without commenting or asking questions. We are here to listen and understand each other's perspectives. I invite [name of first participant] to begin, sharing for one minute.

After each participant has spoken, the facilitator pauses for one minute of silence before inviting the next person:

Let's take a moment in silence to reflect on what we just heard, allowing the Spirit to deepen our understanding.

Pause for one minute. Invite the next participant to speak, and repeat until all have shared.

Step 3: Group Reflection and Discussion

Now that everyone has shared, let's consider together what we've heard. Here are some questions to guide our discussion:

- *What did I hear in the group?*
- *What particularly resonated with me?*

- *Was there a common thread or direction in what was shared?*
- *What new insights have I gained from this conversation?*

Step 4: Open Discussion

Let's take some time now to discuss any insights or reflections that have emerged. Please feel free to speak openly, sharing any connections or new perspectives that came to mind as we listened to each other.

Closing Prayer

After the discussion concludes, the facilitator invites the group to close with the prayer provided.

Opening

Welcome, everyone. Today, we will reflect on the stimulus materials and explore how they might apply to our ministry or work. We'll follow the Spiritual Conversation Model, where we listen deeply, share openly, and reflect together. Let's begin.

Step 1: Reading and Reflecting

Take a few moments to read the materials and reflect on the questions. Notice any new insights or questions that arise for you.

Allow time for reading and reflection.

Step 2: Sharing Without Interruption

Now, let's go around the group. Each person will have 1 minute to share their thoughts or questions, followed by 30 seconds of silence for reflection. Please speak from your own experience and let others listen without interruption.

Facilitate the sharing and silence.

Step 3: Applying New Understandings

- *Thank you for sharing. Now, how can these new insights be applied to the way we operate in our ministry, team, or board?*
- *What shifts might we make to better live out our mission?"*

Invite suggestions and reflections from the group.

Step 4: Gathering Suggestions in Prayer

Let's gather these reflections and suggestions in prayer. I invite you to join me in saying the prayer provided.

Closing

Thank you for your contributions today. May the insights we've shared guide us in our work. Go in peace.

Opening

Welcome, everyone. Today we will engage in *Lectio Divina*—a prayerful reading process that involves four stages: *Lectio* (Reading), *Meditatio* (Meditation), *Oratio* (Prayer), and *Contemplatio* (Contemplation). I will guide you through each step. Let's begin.

Step 1: Lectio (Reading)

Please read the passages slowly and attentively. Listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you, something that resonates in your heart. Afterward, sit quietly with this word for a moment.

Allow time for reading and reflection.

Step 2: Meditatio (Meditation)

Now, read the passage again. Focus on the word or phrase that spoke to you. Ask yourself: What is God inviting me to notice or reflect on right now? Allow your thoughts to unfold as you listen for deeper understanding.

Allow time for reading and reflection.

Step 3: Oratio (Prayer)

Read the passage a third time, prayerfully considering:

- What is God saying to me?
- What feelings do these words stir in me?
- How do these words speak to my life or current situation?"

Spend a few moments in silent prayer or respond in your heart. Allow time for prayerful reflection.

Step 4: Contemplatio (Contemplation)

Read the passage one last time. Ask:

- What gift has God given me through this text?
- What action might God be inviting me to take?

Take a moment to rest in God's presence and listen quietly.

Allow time for final reading and contemplation.

Step 5: Sharing

I invite you to share any thoughts or insights with the group (10 minutes).

Closing

Thank you for your reflections. As we close, carry the word or phrase with you today. Let it guide you. We will finish with the prayer provided.



SEE-JUDGE-ACT METHOD

Opening:

Welcome, everyone. Today we'll use the SEE-JUDGE-ACT method to reflect on our ministry's approach to inclusion and engagement. We'll move through three stages: SEE (observe), JUDGE (reflect), and ACT (respond). I'll guide us through each step.

SEE: Observing the Current Situation

Let's begin by considering the current state of our ministry.

- Who is involved in decision-making?
- Are the voices around the table representative of the diversity in our ministry and community?
- How does our ministry walk with others in working for the Common Good?

Take a moment to reflect on these questions as a group. Please share your thoughts openly.

Allow time for group discussion (5 minutes).

JUDGE: Reflecting on Guidance and Values

Next, let's reflect on what Pope Francis teaches us about building cultures of encounter and inclusion.

- What guidance does he offer?
- What values from Catholic Social Teaching can help guide our discernment on these matters?

We'll discuss how these teachings can inform our decisions and approach.

Allow time for group discussion (5 minutes).

ACT: Moving Toward Action

Finally, let's think about concrete actions we can take.

- What can we do to ensure greater involvement and engagement in our communities?
- How can we work with others, locally and nationally, to create more inclusive structures?

Consider how we can move forward with intention and commitment.

Allow time for group discussion (5 minutes).

Closing Prayer:

Let us now close with the prayer provided.

Opening

Today, we engage in a process of spiritual discernment, seeking God's guidance and listening to one another. Our goal is to reflect on leadership, inclusivity, and how we can better serve the community.

Step 1: Reflect on the**Source Material**

Take a moment to listen deeply to the source material. Discernment is about aligning our decisions with God's will and understanding the Spirit's movement in our midst.

Step 2: Small Group**Discussion**

In small groups, reflect on one of the following questions:

- *What wisdom might Indigenous people bring to leadership?*
- *How does your founding charism influence your approach to inclusive leadership?*
- *What are the moral implications of exclusion in ministry leadership?*
- *What are the social implications of missing voices in ministry?*
- *What might a generational lens offer in decision-making?*

As you discuss, listen to each other with openness, allowing the Spirit to guide your insights.

Step 3: Group Sharing

We'll now share insights from our small groups. Listen attentively, with respect for each perspective, and notice where the Spirit is leading us.

Step 4: Reflection on**Diversity of Voices**

Reflect briefly on the value of including diverse voices in leadership.

- *What can we learn from each other's experiences, particularly from those who are marginalised or unheard?*

Closing Prayer

Let's gather these reflections and suggestions in prayer. I invite you to join me in saying the prayer provided.

Closing Words:

Thank you for your participation. May the insights shared today guide you as you lead with compassion and inclusivity.

Opening and Introduction (2 minutes)

Dadirri is an Indigenous Australian practice of deep listening, involving both attention to words and the silence between them. It encourages being present without judgment, and with patience.

I invite you to approach the session with openness, focusing on listening deeply to the present moment.

Step 1: Reading/Stimulus Material (5 minutes)

We will now read the texts related to listening, silence, or presence.

Remember, the art of listening is not just hearing words. It is being present with the person in that moment, seeing the beauty of silence and understanding the depth of the spaces between.

I now invite [name of first participant] to read the text slowly and clearly, encouraging others to listen deeply, focusing on emotions or thoughts that arise.

Step 2: Silent Reflection (2 minutes)

Please sit silently to reflect on the material and its personal meaning.

Step 3: Sharing (8-10 minutes)

Each participant will have 1 minute to share their thoughts or feelings, focusing only on what they heard or felt, without judgment or offering solutions.

- Ensure no interruptions.
- After each person speaks, pause for 1 minute of silence to reflect on what was shared.
- Gently remind the group to focus on listening and not to formulate responses while others are speaking.

Step 4: Group Reflection and Discussion (5 minutes)

Now let's share with the group our reflections on deep listening using these questions.

- *How did it feel to listen deeply, without judgment?*
- *How did the silence between words affect your experience?*
- *How might you incorporate deep listening into your life or ministry?*

Closing Prayer

Let us now close with the prayer provided.

Opening:

Welcome, everyone. Today, we'll reflect on how to sustain the synodal process into the future. I'll guide us through a series of steps, and I encourage you to listen attentively and share openly as we go along.

Step 1: LISTEN – What did we hear?

Let's start by sharing what stood out to us from the readings or our own experiences.

- *What are the key issues we need to address in sustaining the synodal process?*

Step 2: DEEPEN – What did we learn around the table?

- *How have our views changed or deepened as we've listened to different perspectives?*

Step 3: DISCERN – How can we respond?

- *Now, how do our shared values guide us in responding to this challenge?*
- *What actions are we called to take to ensure the synodal process continues?*

Step 4: DEEPEN – What more do we need to know?

- *What voices have we not heard?*
- *Are there perspectives or groups we need to consider more deeply?*

Step 5: DECIDE – What actions can we take?

- *What concrete steps can we take to build hope for the future of the synodal Church?*
- *Who needs to be involved, and how can we communicate our decisions?*

Closing Prayer:

Let us pray together the closing prayer..

Closing:

Thank you for your reflections. Let's continue this journey of synodality together.



CONVERSATION METHOD

Opening:

Today, we will reflect on key factors impacting the Catholic Church globally and locally. Our goal is to deepen our shared understanding and discern potential actions. We'll proceed through four steps: Facts, Feelings, Meanings, and Actions. Please listen attentively to one another, and let's engage in a spirit of openness.

Step 1: FACTS – Focus on the data

Let's start by looking at the facts. Consider the socio-cultural issues impacting the expression of Catholic faith in Australia today.

- *What factors are influencing the global Church, as noted in John Allan's book, and how do they relate to our context?*

Please share what stands out to you from this information.

Step 2: FEELINGS – Personal Reactions

Now, let's move to our feelings.

- *How do you feel about the information we've just discussed?*
- *Are there any concerns or worries about the changes happening globally or locally in the Church?*

Take a moment to reflect and then share your initial emotional responses to these facts and trends.

Step 3: MEANINGS – Implications for our lives and ministries

Next, let's consider the meanings of these changes.

- *How will these shifts in society and the Church affect your life and ministry over the next 5 to 10 years?*
- *What are the most serious challenges we face as a community?*

Let's share our understanding of social change and the impacts on the Church.

Step 4: ACTIONS/ DECISIONS – Concrete steps

Now that we've reflected on the facts, feelings, and meanings, let's focus on action. What are one or two immediate steps we can take in response to the challenges we've discussed?

Let's discuss any new directions this group needs to take to address these issues?

Closing Prayer:

Let us now close with the prayer provided.

Opening

Welcome, everyone. Today, we'll walk through the Ignatian Communal Examen, a reflective process that invites us to listen for God's presence and guidance as we consider the future of the Church. Let's open our hearts to the Holy Spirit as we move through each step together.

Step 1: OPENNESS AND PRESENCE

Take a moment to settle into silence. Breathe deeply and be aware of God's presence with us, here and now. Open your heart to God's guiding Spirit as we begin.

Step 2: REFLECTION ON THE QUESTION

Let's reflect on the following questions:

- What excites or challenges you about the future of the Church?
- How do you see the Church embracing the digital space?

Take a few moments to reflect quietly, use the space provided for notetaking.

Step 3: QUESTIONING AND LISTENING

Now, let's listen to one another. Share your feelings of consolation (peace, joy, hope) or desolation (confusion, fear, unrest).

- How are you feeling about the Church's future and its new challenges?
- What stirs in your heart?

Step 4: GOING FORWARD

Remember, God walks with us on this journey. Trust that God is guiding us as we discern how to move forward together. Let's pray for the grace to embrace this journey with courage and hope.

Closing Prayer

Let us pray the final prayer together

Closing

Thank you for your openness. Let's continue to walk together, listening for God's guidance as we move forward in faith.

Opening:

Welcome, everyone. Today, we will engage in the Franciscan discernment process, which emphasises prayerful listening, shared reflection, and humble action. Together, we will seek God's guidance on how to build a synodal culture that reflects the Franciscan values of poverty, humility, peace, and care for creation. Let's open our hearts to the Spirit as we journey together in this communal pilgrimage.

**Step 1: PRAYERFUL
LISTENING AND
AWARENESS**

Let's begin by taking a few moments in silence. As we listen to God's call, reflect on the readings presented.

- *What is God inviting you to hear?*
- *What does this message stir within you?*

Please take this time to listen quietly and open your hearts to God's voice.

**Step 2: REFLECTIVE
UNDERSTANDING**

Now, I invite you to share your thoughts on building a synodal culture.

- *What does it mean to you?*
- *How can we embody the values of synodality in our daily lives and in the life of the Church?*

Feel free to share any insights, hopes, or challenges you may have regarding the call to synodality.

**Step 3: DECISIVE ACTION
IN HUMILITY**

As we reflect on how to live out these values, let's now focus on action.

- *What three or four practical actions can we take, individually and as a group, to embrace the spirit of synodality and Franciscan values?*

Please suggest concrete steps that we can commit to going forward.

**Closing Prayer and Prayer
of Commitment**

Let us gather these ideas into a prayer of commitment as together we say the final prayer.

A FINAL WORD

The aim of this resource is to encourage a deeper engagement with discerning the movement of the Spirit in your life, particularly in leadership and communal decision-making. The process of discernment is transformative, often uncomfortable, and can challenge you in ways that may not always be immediate, easy or clear. It is a journey that requires accompaniment, as true discernment is not a quick fix but a gradual process, permeating over time to shape both your heart and your decisions.

Throughout these pages, you've seen how prayer, openness, and listening to the Holy Spirit can deeply transform your approach

to leadership. The journey can be difficult, even when you understand the process, because the Spirit often calls us to prioritise things we might not initially want to hear or do. Our hope for you is that, beyond your time spent in prayer, you will be led into moments of discernment—especially in meetings—where you seek to clarify what you are being called to prioritise. What needs your focused response, guided by the Spirit, in your community and leadership?

The *Synod on Synodality* provides a living example of how these challenges play out. Rooted in prayer, listening, and dialogue, it sought to discern how the Church could walk together in unity. While it brought

clarity, the process itself was not always easy, as leaders wrestled with what the Spirit was asking of them.

Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, reflected on how the process deepened his understanding of listening:

The Synod has helped me to listen not just to words, but to the people themselves, to their stories, and to the movements of the Spirit in their lives. This process of walking together is not just about reaching a consensus, but about listening deeply to the Spirit in one another (Synod on Synodality: A Path to Walking Together, 2022).

Sister Nathalie Becquart, Undersecretary of the

Synod, shared how her own sense of mission was deepened by the process:

The Spirit is not just about speaking; it's about being open to God's presence and moving with it. What I have learned is that the Holy Spirit is leading us to be a more listening Church, one that doesn't just decide top-down, but listens and acts with humility (Interview with Sister Nathalie Becquart, 2022).

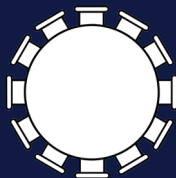
These testimonies reveal a key theme of this resource: **leadership is not just about making decisions but about discerning what the Spirit is asking of you.**

The *Synod on Synodality* offers a model for engaging in a continuous process of listening and responding to

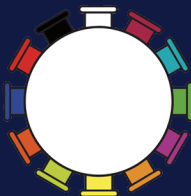
the Spirit. It challenges you to ask:

- What is the Spirit asking you to prioritise?
- How can you respond with openness, attentiveness, and courage, especially when the journey feels difficult?

This resource is not merely about reflecting on discernment but also about providing practical examples of how to live it out in your leadership. As you continue your journey, let the experiences and lessons from the *Synod on Synodality* guide you. Remember, discernment requires more than just prayer and discussion — it demands a deep, active listening to the Spirit, and a humble, courageous response to the needs of your community.



May you, as a leader, continue to be transformed through this ongoing journey of discernment, and may you always remain open to the unexpected ways the Spirit is calling you to greater love, service, and unity.



We have created printable cards for you to use, including Facilitator Guide Cards and Individual Question/Discernment Cards. These resources are designed to support your discernment process, whether in group settings or personal reflection. For additional training and accompaniment, please contact Mercy Partners Formation. We are here to assist you in fully engaging with this resource and supporting your leadership journey.

**SCAN THE QR CODE TO
ACCESS DOWNLOADABLE
PDFS**

**Explore the resources
categorised for every
process:**

- **Prayer Cards**
- **Facilitator Guides**
- **Personal Discernment Cards**



For further information or support, please contact Mercy Partners Formation at **formation@mercypartners.org.au**

If you're interested in exploring more of our resources, please visit: **www.mercypartners.org.au/formation-shop/**
Here, you'll find a variety of materials designed to support your spiritual growth, deepen your understanding of charism, and enhance your leadership journey. We look forward to accompanying you in mission and faith.

PROCESS REFERENCES:

1. Conversations in the Spirit

Website: <https://www.cgevangelisation.org.au/conversation/>

2. Process of Discernment

Website: <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/listening-and-discernment/>

3. Lectio Divina

Website: <https://www.carmelites.org.au/prayer-reflections/lectiodivina>

4. See-Judge-Act Method

Website: <https://grassroots.caritas.eu/see-judge-act/>

5. Spiritual Discernment

Website: <https://conversatio.org/discernment-recognizing-and-responding-to-the-presence-of-god/>

6. Dadirri – The Art of Deep Listening

Website: <https://www.miriamrosefoundation.org.au/dadirri/>, includes video by Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann.

7. Reflection Process

Resource: <https://cha.org.au/product/mission-discernment-resource/>

Website: <https://www.chausa.org/publications/health-progress/archive/article/july-august-2003/lessons-of-mission-discernment>.

8. Conversation Method

Website: <https://conversational-leadership.net/conversational-methods-introduction/>

9. Ignatian Discernment Examen

Website: <https://www.jesuitseastois.org/discernment>

10. Franciscan Discernment

Website: <https://www.franciscantradition.org/a-franciscan-spirituality-of-discernment/>

11. Visio Divina

Website: <https://catholicidentity.bne.catholic.edu.au/prayer/SitePages/Praying-with-art.aspx>

