The Fundamental Questions for Synodal Sessions

Introduction: Setting the Stage for Our Conversations

Simply put, the word synod or living as a synodal Church means journeying together. All of the baptized, the People of God journeying together. Pope Francis reminds us that this “journeying together — laity, pastors, the Bishop of Rome — is an easy concept to put into words, but not so easy to put into practice.” (Address of Pope Francis Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, October 17, 2015).

We journey in communion with the Lord and with one another. By virtue of Baptism, each person on the journey has equal dignity as a child of God. Likewise, each person is called, indeed required, to participate in the Church’s life and mission, according to their own gifts and to the manner of life and ministry to which God has called them. (See Address of Pope Francis for the Opening of the Synod, October 9, 2021).

Our journeying together has a profound purpose. It is the mission Jesus gave us as he ascended into heaven: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). It is about inviting every person to experience the love of Jesus Christ so that “they might have life and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

In our time, Pope Francis believes that God is asking the People of God, the Church, to live more intentionally as a Church that “journeys together.” This is why Pope Francis has called us together today. The Pope wants to hear from all of us about our experiences of the Church, as well as our questions, hopes, and dreams for the Church. By gathering such insights from all of us, listening to his brother bishops, and bringing this all to deep prayer, Pope Francis believes he can better discern how the Holy Spirit is guiding us forward to “where God wants us to be.” (See Address of Pope Francis for the Opening of the Synod, October 9, 2021). So, he has invited us to pause along the journey for prayer, listening, conversation, and discernment. The following questions will help us to do just that.

As we enter into this Synodal Session, we make Pope Francis’ words our own: “Dear brothers and sisters, let us have a good journey together! May we be pilgrims in love with the Gospel and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit” (Homily of Pope Francis - Holy Mass for the Opening of the Synodal Path, October 10, 2021).
The Fundamental Questions

What have been your experiences of church? What have been your joys, hopes, and disappointments? When have you felt connected? When have you felt disconnected?

What might the church learn from your experiences? What new dreams and surprising visions for the Church might God be inspiring?

What actions can you take? What actions should be taken by your parish or the diocese?