

The Revolution of Synodality:



A Listening Church, A Responding Church

“By walking together, and together reflecting on the journey made, the Church will be able to learn from what it will experience which processes can help it to live communion, to achieve participation, to open itself to mission.”

What is a Synod and the Synodal Process?

The word *Synod* comes from the Greek to be “*together on the way.*” It is more than a *meeting*, but a people journeying together on the Jesus way. Pope Francis calls us to listen to “*the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties*” (Gaudium et Spes 1) of the people and the planet, and to prayerfully discern the Spirit’s call. This Synodal listening and discerning the Spirit’s call isn’t just for the Synod of Bishops in 2023, but should shape how every parish, diocese and group proceeds in the future. We are called to be a Spirit-led people.

Seven Aspects of Synodality¹

1. The Pope and the Synod of Bishops invite us to journey together towards our God. Our common humanity and a shared Baptismal dignity demand that we respect each other, listening to each other’s hearts and experiences.
2. Synodality insists that “*in all dialogue, discernment and decision making, it is God’s will that we are seeking, not our own nor our group’s.*” Listen prayerfully to each other to better hear the Holy Spirit’s call.
3. Synodality “*pushes us to make a continuous and vigorous effort to invite everyone into deeper relationship with the Church, in all dimensions of its life.*” All are invited to be

¹ Note: The quotations are from Cardinal Mario Grech, the Secretary-General of the Synod of Bishops from his Address to the United States Conferences of Catholic Bishops. He urged the US Bishops: “*Let the pastors not be afraid to listen to the flock*”

heard, especially the marginalized and the poor. The Church, like her master, is one who serves.

4. *“Synodality brings about an authentic ethic of listening that seeks to learn from and engage all of the members of the community in honesty and charity.” It “demands a willingness on the part of all to give up strongly held positions and goals, and to adopt a culture of dialogue and collective decision making, conscious of the fact that we can be genuinely gifted and enriched when doing so.”*

6. It also *“demands the assumption of responsibility and the readiness to recognize in all humility the ways in which the Church wounds men and women and children and families.”*

7. Synodality is *“an invitation for a missionary outreach of engagement with the world in which we live;”* and the *“great path of evangelization.”* We have Good News to share, but how can better be that proclaiming, serving Church? We are practicing how we are to be Church in the future by prayerfully listening and discerning the Spirit’s call.

Catholic Community at Stanford: Our First Steps in Synodality *Begins With You!*

We will have a series of small group meetings, opportunities to learn from each other, to hear unexpected voices, and to connect with the rich resources that are Stanford.

Step 1: We ask you to begin the process at home with your family and then with your friends this December and early January Have a number of conversations that asks:

- a) *What is your experience of the Church?*
- b) *How has it blessed you? How could it have been better?*
- c) *How can the Church better respond to the crying need of the people?*

We ask you not to argue, defend or inform, but to listen, to learn and to pray about what you have heard.

- d) *What might the Holy Spirit be asking of us, our parish and the Church?*

Report on your conversations via our website (www.stanfordcatholic.org). You can also help us identify people who are willing to share a story or expertise to enlarge our perspectives and foster our prayerful discernment.

Step 2: Participate in our series of small group meetings in mid-January which in turn will initiate further and larger listening and discerning groups.

Step 3: The results are brought together in a larger prayer experience for response. The results will be brought together and sent to the Diocese, the region and Rome for the Synod in 2023.