FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH

COMMUNION ● PARTICIPATION ● MISSION

Listening to All – Nobody Excluded

Accessible Synodality Planning: Inviting and Listening to the Voices of Individuals with Disabilities Within the Body of Christ

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Concerns For a Synod Marked by Synodality

This document provides information and resources to help parishes support the participation of individuals with disabilities in the synod process that is provided on the website of the Office for Pastoral Ministry with Persons with Disabilities of the Archdiocese of Newark. **Click here to access it.** The website itself is a work in progress, so please return often for updated resources and references, including adaptations with images and picture exchange communication symbols.

These recommendations provide a combination of general guidelines for best practices to adapt and plan accessible events and materials. It will also offer some specific examples for adaptations for individuals who require simpler language and/or pictures. Perhaps you will consider offering a range of options for parishes. The same principles of adapting can be applied to other event plans.

Ideal Listening Sessions will support diverse gatherings of individuals with and without disabilities and many other diverse characteristics. The suggestions that follow seek to mirror synodality, listening to each other to discern the presence of the Spirit, of "walking together."

Don't Individuals with Disabilities Benefit From Separate Environments with Focused Supports?

No. We all learn from each other. More learning and growth happens when we interact with people who are different from ourselves. People from different cultures, people who have different experiences, ways of thinking, processing information and learning. We are one human family. When individuals with disabilities are restricted to segregated spaces, the Church misses the benefit of the increased presence of the Spirit amongst us, *within the interactions between* the diverse members of the Body of Christ. And individuals with disabilities miss opportunities for growth and diverse relationships. Data shows that they are at significantly increased risk of bullying, physcial and sexual violence, and poverty.

Disability, the Person, and Community

Disability has been with us throughout human history, but the way it is understood has varied and continues to change. Today it is recognized that the impact of disability in someone's life results from the interaction a particular condition and the environment, which includes the physical environment, attitudes of people in the community, and the processes for participation. It is also an ordinary part of being human. These principles are found in the ADA as well as in international statements the World Health Organization International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO ICF) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

More importantly though, it's a primary understanding within Catholic Social Teaching that individuals with disabilities are all created in the image of God, and therefore equal in dignity within the human family and require access to all that is necessary for a fully human life. Catholics with disabilities belong to the Church by virtue of their baptism with all that this means, including to participate in the mission of the Church as

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promised at Baptism. This also means to be supported by the Church to do this, as the Church promised at their Baptism.

Pope Francis is calling us to take on the mode of synodality as we engage in this process. Throughout all the documents from the Vatican and others it recommended from the Latin American and Australian Churches, the emphasis has been engaging the many diverse voices of the Church and those who have been marginalized within the Church. This is consistent with the vision and purpose of this Office, that individuals with disabilities be appreciated as integral members of the Body of Christ, which is also based in the mission of the Archdiocese of Newark.

See "What Is Disability" and "Language and Imaging" for more understanding of the diversity across disabilities and what kinds of support will be helpful to facilitate participation in the synod process.

Source: Materials to be adapted is based on the following source material: the Vatican Vademecum, Preparatory Document and Tools; Latin American and Caribbean Church: Methodological Guide and support materials. Australian Church: Plenary Key Documents and Synodal Documents.

ENCOUNTER: GETTING TO KNOW INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The following information about disability is provided to illustrate the intersectionality of concerns for individuals with disabilities within the synod process.

1. WHAT IS DISABILITY?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially restricts one or more major life activities that most people consider routine, such as bathing, eating, managing one's own finances or transportation, etc. One in five Americans have a disability and it is the largest minority group, which also intersects every demographic group, women, men, teens, children, every culture, race, and nationality. Individuals with disabilities are married, single, employed, unemployed. Persons with disabilities are members of the clergy, religious, laity, wealthy, poor, immigrants, and nones. Some people don't consider themselves to have a disability if it's part of the aging process for example, becoming hard of hearing or having vision loss, due to stigma that is often associated with disability.

The experience and implications of disability are extremely diverse.
It includes: elderly persons who are hard of hearing and may have vision and/or mobility issues; individuals who have physical disabilities and use wheelchairs, cane or walkers; individuals who have significant issues with hand dexterity and/or verbal expression; individuals who understand and communicate better with simple language or pictures; individuals who have autism, among which there is significant diversity; individuals who have mental health challenges, who are blind or have low vision, who are hard of hearing, etc. People who are Deaf consider Deafness a matter of language and culture, rather than disability, but accessibility is still an important consideration. Disability can occur in utero, at birth and at any moment throughout life, either during developmental stages or through an accident. Also, any one person can have more than one disability.

2. LANGUAGE and IMAGING

Language about disability continues to evolve and change, which can feel daunting to keep up with. However, that's not a reason to disregard its development, because the way people are talked about impacts perceptions of them and how they are treated. There are two styles of language preferred by individuals with disabilities, *person-first* language, for example "I am person with Down Syndrome," and *identity-first* language, "I am an autistic man" or "I am disabled." The preference for *person-first* language reacts to the historical experiences of individuals with disabilities to be defined by their disability and treated as objects of pity to be taken care of. *Identity-first* language rejects the normative cultural assessments that devalue individuals with disabilities. Those who prefer it want to call attention to this and that disability is an important part of who they are.

People with either preference want to be seen in their fullness as human beings and draw attention to the disabling aspects of the environment. When you're unsure about language, ask the person how they like to be referred to. The National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) recommends person-first language. The exception is

when the individual you are talking to or writing about prefers identity-first language. And remember, it's always okay to refer to someone by their name.

What's Wrong with Euphemisms About Disability?
Individuals with disabilities reject euphemistic language as patronizing and indicating a discomfort with disability, that it is something not discussed in polite society. Examples of this are "differently-abled" and "special needs." "Special needs" is a holdover from special education and is also rejected by individuals with disabilities. When encountered, it is typically parents or family members who have become so used to being told what their loved one cannot do or will never do, rather than considering what they can do and their possibilities for growth with appropriate education and support. "There are no special needs, only human needs. However, some will require extra support" (Erik Carter, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities). Everyone needs to belong, to be listened to, to contribute, to be needed, to be heard, appreciated, supported, access to education …. The faith we proclaim calls us to support this.

Additional concerns when portraying individuals with disabilities in language and visuals.
Persons with disabilities are each a person who has abilities, interests, fears, desires, deficits, vulnerabilities, needs, just like everyone else. They do not want to be pitied or portrayed as inspiring examples of overcoming. Photos of individuals with disabilities should be of them participating in ordinary ways in the Church within typical settings, in age-appropriate ways, and avoid segregated settings.

Additional Information on Language and Writing about Individuals with Disabilities

Click here for English Guidelines: How to Write about People with Disabilities 9th Edition, 2020.

Click here for Spanish Directes: Como Escribir Sobre Personas cone Discapacidades Novena Edicion.

Click here for a good article that discusses person-first language versus identity-first language by an autistic man.   It's very insightful.

*Erik Carter, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

3. INVISIBLE NO MORE

To be counted is to be seen. Too often individuals with disabilities feel like hidden exiles in their own communities (Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti,* 98). As you gather demographic data during the synod process to gain a clearer understanding of the many dimensions of your local Church, please also remember individuals with disabilities.

Demographic Questions on Disability

Do you identify as having a disability? If yes, what type of disability is it? Please check all that apply. - I prefer not to answer. - Autism Spectrum Disorder - Learning Disability - Developmental Disability - Intellectual Disability - Speech or Language Disability - Mental Health Concern - Orthopedic Disability - Hard of Hearing/Hearing Loss - Deafness - Blindness or Low Vision - Neuromuscular Disability - Neurological Disability - Immunodeficiency - Auto Immune Disorders - Chronic Pain - Other (please specify)	Does a family member identify as having a disability? If yes, what type of disability? Please check all that apply. - I prefer not to answer. - Autism Spectrum Disorder - Learning Disability - Developmental Disability - Intellectual Disability - Speech or Language Disability - Mental Health Concern - Orthopedic Disability - Hard of Hearing/Hearing Loss - Deafness - Blindness or Low Vision - Neuromuscular Disability - Neurological Disability - Immunodeficiency - Auto Immune Disorders - Chronic Pain - Other (please specify)

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ACCOMPANY: CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

We demonstrate sincere interest, respect, and concern for individuals with disabilities when we pay attention their participation needs. This includes preparing our spaces, resources, processes, and interactions. Also, these strategies often benefit people who don't have a disability as well. For example, ramps made spaces accessible not only to people who use wheelchairs but also parents with children in strollers.

1. PHYSCIAL PARTICIPATION, SEE/HEAR, UNDERSTAND

An accessible event attends to three important characteristics: physical participation, see/hear, comprehension. In other words, are people able to get into and move around the space, are they able to receive the information, and are they able to understand it? Disabling aspects of the environment is more than a lack of ramp or elevator alternative to stairs. It also refers to cramped seating that impedes wheelchair users, people who need to move around a bit, someone who is blind and uses a white cane or service dog to move around. It also refers to access to the information shared. This refers to being able to interact with it as it is presented or shared in handouts or on a website. It also refers to comprehension. Is the language understandable? For example, font size and color are important considerations in handouts and on slides and accessibility via screen reader and audio files are important considerations. More on this below in accessibility information.

Be Prepared – Planning Ahead In Registration Process: What to Ask

- Do you need handouts in an alternative format? Large print (San serif font such as Ariel, 17 or larger)?

- Do you need the slides ahead of time digitally? Individuals who are blind or have low vision will typically prefer accessing through the screen reader on their computer during the presentation. (See Preparing Accessible Presentation for more information)

- Providing handouts earlier limits your need for printing and also benefits individuals who are blind or have low vision or need more time to process information. (See Preparing Accessible Presentation)

- Do you need an interpreter or captioning?

- Do you need to sit up front for better hearing and/or reading lips? [Or does facility have a hearing loop system?]

- Do you need physical mobility assistance? Do you use a wheelchair, cane, walker, scooter, etc?

- Do you need note taking assistance?

- Do you communicate better with pictures and stories? In this case it will help to have an additional 'recorder' at the table. If possible, this is someone from the parish that knows the person, such as a catechist, or who knows them in some other way. A teen leader could be very good at this also, as well as an educator or education student in the parish.

- If the above, it could be good for this recorder to listen and talk with the person to the side first, before sharing with the group. Another possibility is to meet at another time or before the meeting begins to start the process of sharing.

- Do you have food or environmental allergies?

- Is there anything else we should know?

Building Accessibility – Can people get into the building and move it?
Are there designated disability parking spaces and drop off location near the entrance? Is the parking area uncluttered and have curb cutouts, appropriate lighting to see at night? Is there clear signage for entrance, exit, restrooms? Are the restrooms accessible to wheelchair users? Is there a ramp or elevator for people who can't use stairs?

Room Layout – It is laid out so that people can move easily and safely throughout it?
It is recommended to have room layout such that people who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices and people who are blind can move through the gathering space and have choices of where to sit. It is recommended that side aisles are at least 60" and inner aisles at least 36" and are free of chairs, power chords, etc. Seating should allow for mixed seating and personal preference. For example, don't designate a specific table or area for wheelchair users.

Designate at least one greeter who can assist anyone who needs a chair moved to allow space for their wheelchair or service dog.

Additional Resources for Best Practices for Planning Accessible Events and Presentations

Click here for NCPD Program LAMB (Language, Accessibility, Meaningful Participation, and Belonging) Assessment Key, English

Click here for NCPD LAMB Assessment Key in Spanish.

ADA National Network: A Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible to People With Disabilities, Printer-friendly PDF and Large Print PDF. **Click here to access the Planning Guide.**

Preparing Accessible Presentation

Participants can hear, see, and understand the material presented and can participate in the event/process.

PowerPoint slides and projected material have two primary concerns, that they are accessible and understanded during the presentation. Projected material should be visible from the back of the room. This includes texts and important visuals such as charts and graphs. Individuals who are blind or have low vision should have access to

digital copy of the presented material to access through their screen reader or preferred formatting. This will also benefit individuals who need more time to process information.

Slide layout and formatting suggestions:

- Font: a sans serif font such as Arial, Calibri, Tahoma, or Veranda.

- Slide title size should be at least 44.

- Slide text should be 24 -36.

- Limit the amount of information on each slide, ideally to a maximum of 8 lines per slide.

- Leave space at the bottom for captions to show in the recording.

- Text at left margin, not full justified.

- Simple backgrounds are preferred that have high contrast between text and background.

- Use Microsoft Accessibility Check before recording and share slides. **Click here to access Microsoft Accessibility Check** instructions**.**

- Describe charts, tables, and any important visuals in presentation within flow of your comments. You can add descriptions to all of these within presentation by right-clicking on 'alt text' and add simple description.

- Handouts: San serif font size 12, 17 for large print.

Accessibility Check Common Issues
Check the accessibility of a PowerPoint, in Windows select "File/Info/Check" for Issues and choose 'Check Accessibility." On a Mac, select the "Review tab, then 'Check Accessibility.' It will note slides with issues.

Screen readers need to understand correct reading order. The items furthest to the back are read first. NOTE: Microsoft products interpret reading order based on the order the text is entered, so using the accessibility checker is important.

Captioning for videos and PowerPoint presentation helps people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing understand audio content, reading learners better understand and remember content, and non-native speakers to follow and understand content. **Click here for more guidance on recommendations for accessible videos.**

To provide captioning for PowerPoint presentations, select 'always use subtitles' in Slide Show options. Then select 'Subtitle Settings' to specify layout. Unfortunately, the captioning isn't stored in the PowerPoint recorded presentation.

Handouts – Distributed and online.
- Printed handouts should be clear, dark text on white or light-colored background. San serif, such as Arial 12 typically and 17 for large print. Text at left margin, not full justified.

- Digitally, as noted, may not need to print. However, they should be available before the event.

- Digitally accessible means accessible to people who are blind, Deaf or Hard of Hearing, have low vision.

- Are they understandable by people who process better through pictures and visuals?

- Recording presentation that includes good descriptions of all visual material can be posted later as an audio file.

- It's easier to correct accessibility in PowerPoint and Word before converting to PDF. This means using style elements, noting heading levels, alt text for all visuals. In Word, Windows, "Save as Adobe PDF" will maintain formatting. On a Mac, select "Create and Share Adobe PDF." The accessibility should carry through to your PDF document. Unfortunately, an accessible PDF can't be created from PowerPoint on a Mac at this time, but it can in Windows. **Click here for more information on PDF accessibility.**

Resources for more information on presentations and handouts:

Full range of accessibility guidelines summarized succinctly with links for more in depth information, including captioning options, demystifying screen reading accessibility, and best practices for audio description, using simple language, and Microsoft applications, etc.. Associations Of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) **https://www.aucd.org/conference/template/page.cfm?id=50274**

Microsoft resources for creating accessible Office resources: **https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/create-accessible-office-documents-868ecfcd-4f00-4224-b881-a65537a7c155**

Web Accessibility in Mind, PowerPoint, Word, and PDFs:
PowerPoint https://webaim.org/techniques/powerpoint/#layouts Acrobat/
Word https://webaim.org/techniques/acrobat/converting#word

Microsoft, Word Spanish: https://support.microsoft.com/es-es/topic/haga-que-los-documentos-de-word-sean-accesibles-para-personas-con-discapacidades-d9bf3683-87ac-47ea-b91a-78dcacb3c66d?correlationid=bec8c679-171f-4cee-807b-ef27a0c35ba1&ui=es-es&rs=es-es&ad=es#top

Web Accessibility Initiative, Audio and Video Media: https://www.w3.org/WAI/media/av/

Web 3 Accessibility Initiative for more on all stages of planning accessible events and presentations: https://www.w3.org/WAI/teach-advocate/accessible-presentations/#fyi

Videos: Reviews of different captioning products: https://wethegeek.com/best-closed-captioning-software/

During an Accessible Presentation

Suggestions for the presenter and table facilitators to communicate with group(s).

- Speak clearly and use simple language for different comprehension levels. Avoid jargon, which includes much of our treasured theological and spiritual language. Particularly since we want to listen to people who feel disengaged with the Church, we can't presume these terms will be familiar or relatable.

- Be visible: face participants when speaking and keep microphone and hands away from your face for people who lip-read. They will presumably be sitting in the front, so you should stay in the front of the room.

- Use microphone for large room presentation and repeat questions if participants don't have a microphone.

- Cover all the text on slides, which is different than simply reading the slides.

- Pace your delivery to give people a chance to process the information.

- Allow time for movement breaks OR encourage those who need to walk around periphery of room if needed.

- Describe pertinent visuals and graphics.

- Describe any visual information. For example, if you ask people to raise their hands in response to a question, say what percentage or approximate number of people did so.

- Hearing assistance: hearing loop, FM or Infrared Systems for people who are Hard of Hearing or have hearing aids or cochlear implants.

- ASL for people who are Deaf. Speak at a reasonable pace for interpreter and you should be standing near each other, so individuals watching the interpreter can also see your expressions and gestures. Spell any unfamiliar words. ASL is used for people who speak Spanish, but interpreter should be bilingual.

- Limit background noise as much as possible.

2. THE 10 THEMES – SOME ALTERNATE QUESTIONS for REFLECTION

Below are suggestions for simpler wording of questions to reflect the ten themes. These were suggested to help reflect on "lived synodality," taking the time to be together as a community and reflect together about your parish as a community of people that lives out the Gospel, both in the way it is concerned about its members and is concerned about impacting the local community beyond itself.

- I've offered adaptations for all 10, so there is a selection for whichever themes are selected. These are only general suggestions. Feel free to adapt based on the people you are engaging with.

- It would be good to come up with some good illustrations of the selected themes. They could work for everyone.

Companions on the Journey
- Who makes you feel good in your parish?

- Who looks lonely in your parish?

- Who doesn't have any friends?

- Do you feel lonely in your parish?

Listening
- Who do you not like to listen to?

- Why do you feel that way?

- Who do other people not listen to?

- Why do you think that?

Speaking Out
- Do you feel like people listen to you in your parish?

Celebration
- Is attending mass important to you?

- Do people at mass say hello to you?

- Do people at mass show they care about you?

- What is your favorite part of mass?

- What don't you like about mass?

Sharing Responsibility for Our Common Mission
- Does your parish work together to help people outside of the parish?

- What does it do?

- Who does it help?

Dialogue in Church and Society
- Do you think that different kinds of people work together in your parish?

Ecumenism?
- Does your parish make friends with other faith communities to help people in your town that need help?

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Authority and Participation
- Who decides what your parish will do together?
- Is it one person or is it a group of people?
- How is it done?

Discerning and Deciding
- Do you think decisions about what your parish will do could be made in a different way?
- Are there other people you think should be involved?

Forming Ourselves in Synodality
- How does your parish teach about working together?
- Who teaches how to do this?
- Is it one person or are there more people that lead this?

3. PLANNING for an ACCESSIBLE SYNODAL PROCESS (in person)

Facilitating comfort and trust amongst participants is important. Allow for alternative options, such as:

- Scheduled listening sessions. In general, it's important to provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities and their families to participate general listening sessions through your general invitations and announcements. More will be said below on support for participating in a general listening session.

- Incorporate listening sessions into new community or action-oriented gathering. For example, the new Vine & Branches collaboration within or between parishes in the Archdiocese of Newark.

- Leverage comfort and strength within active groups already meeting in the parish with a listening session. This option be more comfortable for individuals who prefer kinesthetic engagement in addition to environment of trusting relationships. This could include time after an Inclusive Family Mass. Then provide participants with resources to reach out to others who either feel estranged from the Church or uncomfortable with a listening session platform.

- 90 minutes or longer may be too long for some people or they may have transportation issues, or uncomfortable with the environment. Possible options are to offer multiple shorter sessions that build on each other, suggestion above about empowering outreach, or one of the additional possibilities listed here below.

- Reach out to individuals with disabilities and/or family members and ask if they would prefer someone visits in their home or on the phone to ask questions. Even if they say no, they will at least know you care, are interested, and want to be supportive.

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- Accept alternate forms of communication that reflect on the questions, such as audio recordings, journaling, or drawings.

- Support alternate communication methods for reflecting on the questions, such as photovoice.[1] More information will be available on this soon.

Considerations for An Adapted Synodal Process Structure and Environment
- Encourage diverse participants, 4 – 6 at a table following "Spiritual Conversation" method. Sharing takes at least one hour (*Vademecum* Appendix, B8). Detailed description of process on Synod website.[2]

- Enhance the reflective experience by providing visuals and quotes around the room that foster reflection, understanding, and connections. Include visuals for any of the 10 themes your parish is focusing on. They should be large enough to be visible from the tables. See "Themes" to select from.

- It is particularly important to either avoid or explain 'theological jargon' with individuals who process better through concrete language, images, and stories. However, you'll also discover many of your 'neurotypical'[3] parishioners will appreciate this as well!

- Introduce "synodality" and the primary questions, and alternate wording. 'Synod' comes from the Greek word meaning 'common path' and means "'pauses on that path' to gain strength and discern." (3 questions to understand Synodality Click here for the Latin American Church on this translated by Google.

- Basic reflection question: "How is this 'journeying together" happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together"?

- It is important to break up compound questions into individual ones as well as adapt wording. Some possibilities are:

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[1] Photovoice has an established history of empowering individuals with limited verbal expressive language, as well as other conditions, to 'speak up' and share their reflective experiences. More coming regarding references and suggestions for this methodology. Support may require providing access to materials, both digital and others, for photovoice journaling. This is important from a social justice perspective to provide space for voices often unheeded.

[2] Emphasizing the importance of such support, "What is most crucial is adopting suitable methods that facilitate attentive listening, genuine sharing, and a communal spiritual discernment." *Vademecum*, 4.4.8.

[3] Usually refers to individuals who do not have one of a number of diverse conditions like autism, dyslexia, and ADHD under the umbrella of 'neurodiversity.' Neurodiversity is part of an emerging recognition that these conditions should be regarded as naturally occurring cognitive variations with distinctive strengths to be acknowledged by supportive communities. This is consistent with Catholic Social Teaching which affirms the dignity of every person, each created in the image of God and deserving of a life that is fully human.

- "How does your parish work together like Jesus teaches us in the Gospel?"

- "What is an example when your parish worked well together?"

- "What is an example when it didn't work well together?"

- "How is the Holy Spirit prompting your parish to do this better?"

- Plan an informal opening activity to foster comfort with each other.

- For people who communicate better with images, have different images/photos that illustrate different experiences or reactions to the questions. Also have paper, pencils, crayons, and thin markers for people who are more comfortable sharing through pictures. ("Suggested tools for reflection, sharing and responding)

- Have table facilitator and at least one recorder, perhaps two for comparing notes, who writes down what people say.

- Have an additional support person that is part of group, but oriented toward simple prompting for individuals who need it and recording what they say.

- Where is guidance on additional support through earlier preparation of quiet area?

Accessible Small Group Sharing – Some Suggestions for Table Facilitators and Recorders

- Suggestions for presenter to the large group will also help table facilitators.

- Table facilitators should have additional resources to draw on to clarify the questions for anyone who doesn't understand them.

- For participants who communicate better through pictures and/or stories, it would be great to have an additional 'recorder' at the table. If possible, this is someone from the parish that knows the person, such as a catechist, or who knows them in some other way. A teen leader could be very good at this also, as well as an educator or education student in the parish.

- It could be good for this recorder to listen and talk with the person to the side first, before sharing with the group. Another possibility is to meet at another time or before the meeting begins to start the process of sharing.

4. TWO POSSIBLE SESSION PLANS

An Adapted Reflection – A Synodal Church: Journeying Together to Announce the Gospel

To facilitator, catechist, or mentor: Use the example of planning a trip to explore the experience of synodality and being a synodal church. This is just one way to develop the conversation using PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System). Be creative and pay attention to the communication and learning styles of the individuals you're journeying with. When asking a general question that you aren't going to call on people to answer, remember to pause and wait for people to at least share their reaction in their own way.[4]

What does it mean to say that our parish is synodal? That's a new word we don't hear every day! I think it's a nice word to say, though. What do you think? Let's say it together, "synodal."

A Church that is *synodal* travels together on the same path, and they stop together to rest and take care of themselves and think about the next step of their journey.

Think about a trip your family or a group of friends went on together. What was the first step? You had to decide where to go. Is that right? What other decisions were made to plan the trip? Some possible ones:

o   Why are you going on this trip? Is it for a vacation and have fun? Is it to visit family? Is it to help someone?
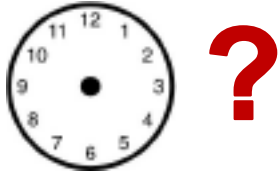

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[4] I want thank Monica Maniscalco, M.Ed., Executive Director of Training & Education at Legacy Life Solutions and a catechist at St. Philip the Apostle Church in Saddlebrook, NJ for her contributions to this adapted reflection.

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o How would you get there? Fly, drive, train, or walk?

o How long would it take to get there?

o Did you need to make stops on the way? Either to sleep, eat, or move around?

o What do you do if you get lost? How do you know that? How do you figure out how to get back on the right road?
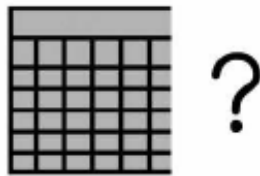
o What kind of clothes do you need to bring? Clothes for cold weather, warm or moderate?

o   What supplies will you need? Food? Camping equipment? Money? Books?
     Games?

o   How many days will the trip be? This will mean how much clothes, supplies
     and equipment you will need.

Do you need tickets for getting there?

o   Who will pay for the costs of the trip?

o   What will you do when you get where you're going?

To the facilitator, catechist, or mentor: Now relate the trip just discussed with a project that your parish is working on together. The project is a trip working together to do the things Jesus taught us. A particular activity would be a destination for your community. A possible introduction:

Each of the projects our parish works on is like a trip together, sharing what Jesus teaches us follow him and how to live. After thinking about the ways your parish works together in different ways, and the way you feel at mass.

Provide quiet time to think about the primary questions, introduced again with alternate wording.

Remember we talked about the primary questions Pope Francis has asked us to think about? [*Below is an alternate way to ask these questions that should be more relatable. "How is this 'journeying together" happening today in our parish? And what changes do we think the Holy Spirit is asking us to make to grow in our 'journeying together'?*]
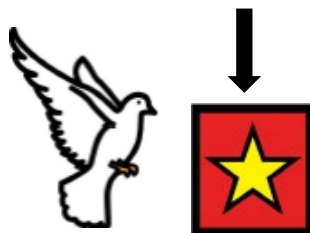
Here's our TWO BIG QUESTIONS

2 BIG?

- o "How does our parish work together, following Jesus?
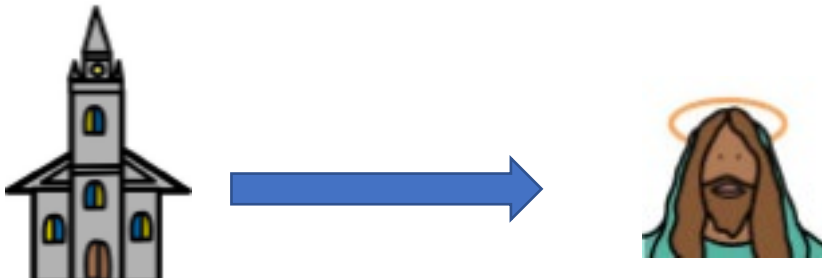
- o What changes do you think the Spirit is encouraging our parish to make so we can do this better?

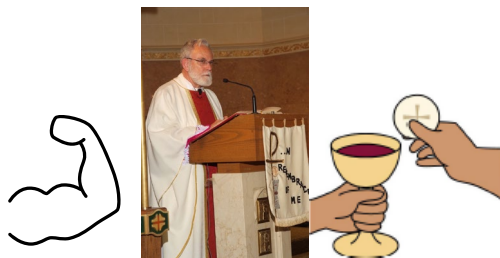There are some SMALLER QUESTIONS that will help us with our BIG QUESTION.

smaller ?+ ?+ ?s ➡️ **BIG ?**

At Mass:

We celebrate that God is with us every day.

We are made stronger by hearing the Word of God and receiving Communion.

And being together and caring about each other.

o *What is your experience at mass?*

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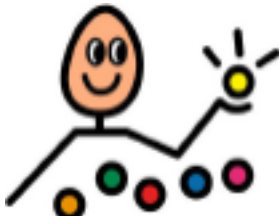- Is attending mass important to you?

- Do people at mass say hello to you?

- Do you feel needed?

- What is your favorite part of mass?

- Is there something you don't you like about mass?

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o *Here's a list of things Jesus teaches us are important.*

To the facilitator: work on one example at a time. The ideas below are possible options, but feel free to adapt.

- o Which of these does your parish do?
- o Do you help?
- o Would you like to?

o Helping to feed people who are hungry?

o Welcoming people from other places and celebrating our diverse human family!

o Taking care of the earth.

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- Sharing nice clothes with people who need them.

- Visiting people who are sick?

Working together as a parish – who decides?

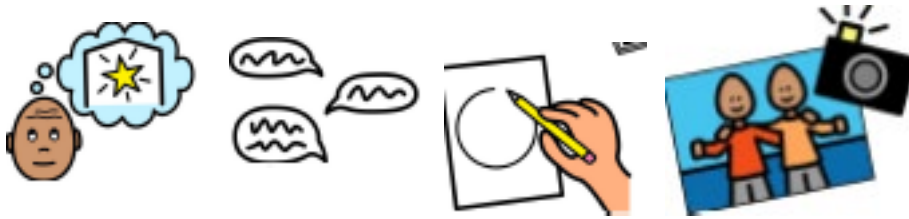- Is it one person or is it a group of people?

- How is it done?

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o   Is there anything else you'd like to share?

THANK YOU!

Full Agenda Possibility

 Opening Prayer: before beginning, ask to think about our primary questions during prayer.

SIMPLE scripture reflection connecting with synodal process, again. Remind people to be thinking of primary questions in mind during this. Suggestions: either Mk 10: 46-52 (NRSV) (my preference because it illustrates different roles and reactions) or Luke 24: 13-35. Both recommended for scriptural approach in "Suggested Tools" for reflection, sharing and responding. Additional ideas: have it acted out or told in narrative.

 Ask people to think of an important experience they had in in parish. "How did you feel? Happy, sad, excited, or scared?"   Give them a few minutes to think.

Then ask, "What do you remember the most about the experience?" Again, still just think about it.

- For people who prefer expressing in pictures, below are two different options:
  - Offer different pictures of people doing things together in the Church.
  - Ask them to draw their Church and the people, including themselves and then to explain their picture. Have paper, pencils, markers, and crayons on hand.

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- The group support person can help with this. They can prompt and guide the individual. It may be helpful for them to move to a quiet space away from the group to do this active reflecting with the support person. And then return to the group table for the sharing.

Round 1: Invite people to share the "fruits of their prayer." Be prepared for different ways of sharing. There is no discussion during this time, only sharing – listening to each other deeply and noticing movements of the Spirit within as they listen to each other. Some questions that may help explore this more. Ask people to answer just one question first to make sure everyone has a chance.

- Think of an important experience for you in your parish. How did you feel? Happy, sad, excited, or scared?

- What do you remember most about i

- Encourage the individuals who selected pictures or drew their answers to explain them to the group. The support person should prompt as needed, but not do the sharing for the person. The point is to encourage them to talk or share for themselves, to the extent they are comfortable doing so and want to.

A period of silence to consider what have heard and considerations ("interior movements").

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Round 2: People are invited to share what was important to them that they heard during Round 1 sharing.

Followed by silence again.

Round 3: Invite to share what made them feel an emotion during the sharing.

- Are there any new insights?

- Any questions left?

Group reviews experience: difficult, new insights, what have they learned about 'the synodal way of proceeding'.

"How was God present and at work during their time together?

Participants should decide on feedback to facilitation team as outlined in *Vademecum* Appendix D.

Closing for all in the Listening Session/Gathering. One person from each group shares briefly about their experience.

Facilitation Team to share next step and how information will be used.

Note: Guidelines recommend synthesizing at each step along the way. We don't want to lose sight of any 'divergent' thoughts and should still carry these forwards. They may appear in other gatherings as well.

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REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Vatican:
For a Synodal Church: Vademecum,
For a Synodal Church: Preparatory Document
Suggested Tools for reflecting, sharing, and responding to the questions of the Synod

Latin American and Caribbean Church:
Methodological Guide and support materials

Australian Church:
Plenary Key Documents
Australia Easy English: https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/resources/tools/
Synodal Documents.

Best Practices for Planning Accessible Events and Presentations:
NCPD Program *LAMB* (*Language, Accessibility, Meaningful Participation, and Belonging*)
Assessment Key, English and Spanish
https://ncpd.org/files/resources-toolkits/LAMB_Assessment_Key_English.pdf

https://ncpd.org/files/file_uploads/LAMB-
_Una_Herramienta_de_Evaluacion_para_una_Participacion_mas_Inclusiva_5-10-21.pdf

Guidelines: How to Write about People with Disabilities 9th Edition, 2020. rtcil.org/guidelines

Full range of accessibility guidelines summarized succinctly with links for more in depth
information, including captioning options, demystifying screen reading accessibility, and best
practices for audio description and Microsoft applications, etc.. Ass. Of University Centers on
Disabilities (AUCD)
https://www.aucd.org/conference/template/page.cfm?id=50274

Web Accessibility in Mind, PowerPoint, Word, and PDFs:
https://webaim.org/techniques/powerpoint/#layouts

https://webaim.org/techniques/acrobat/converting#word

Web 3 Accessibility Initiative for more on all stages of planning accessible events and
presentations:
https://www.w3.org/WAI/teach-advocate/accessible-presentations/#fyi

Photos:
Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) Boardmaker 7. Tobii Dynavox LLC,
Pittsburgh, PA, USA. © Tobii Dynavox AB.

JerseyCatholic.org re: Christmas Eve 2020 St.John's Soup Kitchen in Newark; Mercy House
Coat Drive.

Blog, Sr. Thea Bowman, Franciscan sister of Perpetual Adoration.
http://blogs.shu.edu/archdiocese-immigration/iii-the-new-people-of-newark-a-new-world-a-
microcosm-of-the-universal-church/

Additional photos from parishes in the Archdiocese of Newark provided by the Sequeira and
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