



Continuing the Journey in Synodality

Receiving the fruits of the
Synod of Bishops
and inviting conversations
for new growth



Lent 2024

www.AntigonishDiocese.com/ListeningChurch



"Welcome to the continuing Synod journey in our diocese. As we journey through Lent and Synodal conversations, we remember, as Pope Francis tells us in his Lenten Message this year: "Through the desert God leads us to freedom." Through these continuing conversations and our emergence as a Synodal Church, we pray for healing, connections, and strengthening of us as disciples of Christ, and our communities as nurturing spaces of listening and accompanying all on their faith journeys."

- Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick

In 2021 and 2022, Catholic faithful worldwide were invited to connect, listen, and share their experiences – all voices were welcomed including those no longer engaged with the church and those too often unheard by society in general. These millions of conversations, including those in our diocese, were summarized in regional, national, and continental documents that formed the foundation for discussion at the Synod of Bishops in 2023.

The Synod of Bishops for the first time included as voting members women religious and lay men and women. Their discussions and discernment were summarized in a synthesis report released October 27, 2023.

Our faithful worldwide is again invited to connect, listen, and share their experiences in the context of this Synod summary document. In the Diocese of Antigonish, continuing the Synod journey is the theme of our Lenten journey. Included in this document are resources to assist you, your parish, or your group to host Lenten Synod conversations. These conversations can be of any size, and on any topic of interest. The important thing is to offer a safe and welcoming space of mutual respect, for all to receive, reflect, discern, and share openly and authentically. We then invite you to summarize and submit the highlights of your discussion.

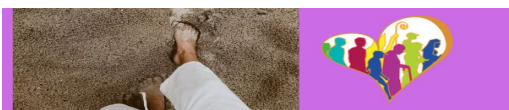
Our diocese in April will be preparing a two-page summary document for submission to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB). The CCCC in turn will submit an eight-page summary to the Synod Secretariat in May 2024.

Pope Francis in his launch of the Synod in 2021 indicated that Synodality was not simply a conversation, obligation, or document: Synodality is a living and ongoing process of connection and evolution, building relationships with ourselves and each other as we draw closer to God through the Scriptures and His Son, Jesus Christ

More importantly, we have this great opportunity of renewing relationships in our parishes and communities.

Thank you for journeying with us in our continued growth as a Synodal church.





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Introduction to Lenten Synod Conversations

Report Highlights and Suggested Questions

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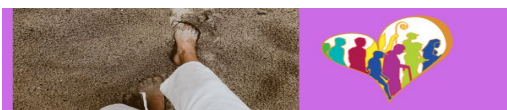
Promotions Kit

Facilitator's Guide

Sample Agenda

Sample Notetaker Forms





Introduction:

Our diocese is among those worldwide invited to continue the Synod journey following the Synod of Bishops and summary document released in October 2023. Dioceses in Canada are invited to host conversations now through April 2024, and provide a two-page summary document to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops by May 1, 2024.

The purpose of these Lenten Synod conversations is two-fold:

1. To receive “the fruits” of the October 2023 summary document
2. To continue the Synodal path of conversion in our parishes and faithful

The Synod Team, appointed in 2021 by Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick, has held discussions on the summary document and identified three priorities for conversation. We include these priorities in the following resources. Also included is a link to the summary document itself, if other priorities are desired. We ask that you share the fruits of your conversation with us: submit by email to Jennifer Hatt, jennifer@dioceseofantigonish.ca by April 8, 2024.

Synod conversations are best when kept simple. Small or large group is possible with the suggested two-hour format, which includes:

- Setting a safe and welcoming space
- Settling and opening with prayer
- Speaking and listening with attention, openness and respect
- Taking notes on high points of the conversation
- Closing with prayer and any identified next steps
- Submitting notes to the diocese for inclusion in our summary report

These conversations may be hosted by parishes, organizations, ministries, or interested faithful. The diocesan Synod team stands ready to assist with resources, information, and presence where possible.

The following resources serve as guides, supports and information. You are invited to adapt to your specific group.

Preparation and Discernment:

A suggested resource to open and prepare for the Synodal conversations are a series of reflections by Fr Timothy Radcliffe, offered at a retreat prior to the Synod of Bishops, at the invitation of Pope Francis. Reflections are available to print or view on video:

<https://www.schoolforsynodality.org.uk/others-resources/synodality-meditationstimothy-radcliffe-op>





Highlights and Questions:

The Synthesis Report is divided into three parts, containing 20 themes in total. Our diocesan Synod team offers a summary from three themes for further discussion in our parishes. You are invited to discuss one or more of these themes for your parish conversation. We ask that you provide us with the fruit of your discussion by April 8, 2024 so we can prepare a diocesan report on these themes. We will synthesize the fruits of our parish discussion groups and provide a diocesan reflection in a short document submitted to the CCCB by mid April 2024.

The Synthesis Report may be read here:

<https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/assembly/synthesis/english/2023.10.28-ENG-Synthesis-Report.pdf>

Highlights and Suggested Questions:

Part 1: The Face of the Synodal Church

From Topic 1. Synodality and Understanding)

‘Synod’ is essentially Christians journeying in communion with Christ with all humanity toward the Kingdom of God, inviting all faithful into intimate conversations with each other, guided by the Holy Spirit and the joys, wounds, and hopes held by those engaged. Synodal practice – silence, prayer, listening, and speaking – has been a part of our faith journey since the New Testament. The Second Vatican Council renewed the church commitment to the Synod journey, and Pope Francis brought it to the forefront in October 2021. Being fully present with our experiences and those of others enables us to know more fully ourselves and our loved ones, friends, and neighbours as all people of God, unique in lives and journeys, united in desire to be closer to God. In that knowledge and connection fostered through mindful conversation, we ourselves and as part of larger communities come to know change not as a loss but as “the dynamic and living tradition” of the church.

Suggested theme for discussion: Poverty

From Topic 4. (People in Poverty)

There are signs everywhere of physical poverty: homelessness, hunger, unaffordable housing, rising prices for food and essentials. Consider the many forms of poverty we may experience: lack of love, respect, companionship, or voice. To be in poverty is to be vulnerable: the unborn and their mothers, those in disrespectful or violent relationships, those unacknowledged, unseen or unheard. Also consider poverty in terms of ecology, how our common home and its resources are treated and drained. Among the most devastating is spiritual poverty, unsure or unaware of life’s purpose, one’s value, the healing love of Christ. We are invited to not only stand with the poor, but to examine carefully whether we ourselves are poor.



Suggested Questions:

- What does poverty mean to you?
- How does poverty show us the face of Christ and help us in our spiritual journey as church?
What do you want and need from church moving forward?
- How can the diocese help?

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Part 2: All Disciples, All Missionaries

From Topic 8. Church is Mission

The church is 'mission' and we in the church are 'missionaries': devoted to living and sharing the love of Christ. We do this using our unique gifts or 'charisms', experiences, and perspectives, honouring our callings to vocations and using our gifts and knowledge to build nurturing communities, support each other in our journeys and be a constant invitation to others to engage in their own journey and join in the communities we create. Charisms have long been associated with religious life and remain powerful tool of engagement and mission by our clergy and women religious. The gifts or 'charisms' of lay Christians are also unique and powerful, distinct and deserving of invitation, enrichment, and renewal. We all have roles to play in the growth and evolution of our faith and our church. It begins with owning and honouring the gifts and purpose we have been given.

Suggested theme for discussion: Family

From Topic 8. Sections c through f

Family is considered "the pillar of every Christian community."

Within a family are individuals of unique gifts and purpose, identified by and identifying by vocation, occupation, gender, age, faith, and/or interests.

Suggested Questions:

- What is 'family' to you?
- How does nurturing 'family' nurture our spiritual journey as church?
What does you and your family want and need from the church moving forward?
- How can the diocese help?

Part 3: Weaving Bonds, Building Communities

From Topic 14. A Synodal Approach to Formation

Formation is nurturing our abilities; more importantly, it is a conversion. There are no defeats and failures. There is only knowledge and experience from which to grow. Formation begins in the family into which we are born and raised and as we grow, our communities shift, emerge,



and expand. As Christians we find a compass to our formation in the Gospels; as Roman Catholics we are nourished on the formation journey by the sacraments.

Suggested theme for discussion: Community

From Topic 16. Toward and Listening and Accompanying Church

Our ability to nourish ourselves and others in the love of Christ depends on the communities in which we engage and create. Communities are meant to encourage and support each member to participate actively and fully in sharing the love of Christ, and the mission of the church, according to each member's gifts or charisms and vocation.

Suggested Questions:

- What does 'community' represent to you?
- How does 'community' nurture our spiritual journey as church?
- What do you want and need from the church to support and create communities moving forward?
- How can the diocese help?

Conversation in the Spirit
A dynamic of discernment in the synodal Church
Synod 2021-2024

PERSONAL PREPARATION
By entrusting oneself to the Father, conversing in prayer with the Lord Jesus and listening to the Holy Spirit, each one prepares his or her own contribution to the question about which he or she is called to discern.

Silence and prayer listening to the Word of God

"Taking the word and listening"
Each person takes turns speaking from his or her own experience and prayer, and listens carefully to the contribution of others.

Silence and prayer

"Making space for others and the Other"

From what the others have said, each one shares what has resonated most with him or her or what has aroused the most resistance in him or her, allowing himself or herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit: **"When, listening, did my heart burn within me?"**

Silence and prayer

"Building together"

Together we dialogue on the basis of what emerged earlier in order to discern and gather the fruit of the conversation in the Spirit: to recognize intuitions and convergences; to identify discordances, obstacles and new questions; to allow prophetic voices to emerge. It is important that everyone can feel represented by the outcome of the work. "To what steps is the Holy Spirit calling us together?"

Final prayer of thanksgiving





Organization Steps:

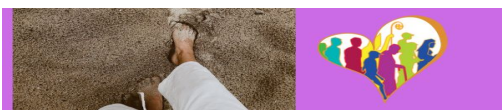
Steps to Organizing/Delivering a Lenten Synod Conversation:

- Identify host (parish, organization, individual) and facilitator
- Set date and location
- Issue invitation via posters, bulletins, and social media
- Plan and set up meeting space: if a small conversation, a round table for comfortable discussion; if a large conversation, arrange several small tables for breakout conversations
- Ensure space is comfortable, quiet, and affords confidentiality to those speaking, with good acoustics to enable effective listening
- Set up tables with pens, notepaper, notetaker forms if using, and other touches that offer hospitality
- Host the conversation: identify a notetaker for each conversation, including breakout conversations
- Submit conversation notes to Jennifer Hatt, Diocesan Communications Officer (jennifer@dioceseofantigonish.ca) for inclusion in the diocesan summary to CCCB
- Note any questions, identified next steps or suggested actions, and follow up with these after the conversation.

Questions during planning and setup?

Contact Jennifer Hatt, Diocesan Communications Officer
(jennifer@dioceseofantigonish.ca)





Materials List:

The Synod Lenten conversations are designed to be personal, informal conversations. These resources do not use virtual or electronic equipment.

If you feel called to host a conversation that makes use of an LCD projector, a screen, and/or Internet access, these resources can be adapted for that.

Contact Jennifer Hatt, Diocesan Communications Officer
(jennifer@dioceseofantigonish.ca)

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Materials List for Synod Lenten Conversations:

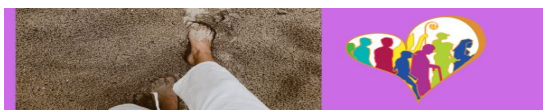
- Synod Prayer cards
(available from the Chancery Office: chancery@dioceseofantigonish.ca, 902-863-3335)
- Agenda per person or table
- Copy of program with opening and closing prayers per person or table
- Notetaking form per person or table
- Plain paper and pens per table
- Flip chart and markers for facilitator use/ group notetaking

Supplemental resource:

Summary Document of the XVI Synod of Bishops

https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/assembly/synthesis/english/2023.10.28-ENG-Synthesis-Report_IMP.pdf





Promotions Kit:

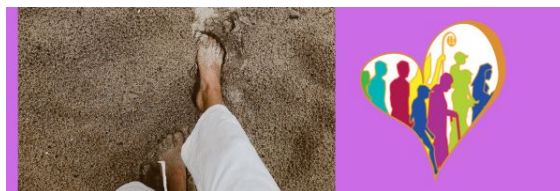
Inviting people to your conversation serves two important purpose:

1. Getting people out to the conversation
2. Promoting the Synod Lenten conversations and the Synod: even if people are not able or choose not attend the conversation, they are seeing Synodality in action thanks to your efforts

Ways to invite participants and promote the conversation:

Printable poster for church, offices, halls, and anywhere visible to people who may be interested in joining the conversation. Poster is included on the next page.

Social media graphics for your parish/organization pages, inviting shares from individuals who manage and follow these pages. These graphics can also be included in emails to parishioners or parish bulletins.



Bulletin notices. A sample notice:

This Lent we continue the Synod journey with a conversation on the Synod of Bishops summary document: where do we go from here?

When/Place/Contact for more information

Timing:

Give people at least two weeks, if possible, to learn about the conversation and include it in their plans. This would allow for two weeks of bulletin notices, and at least two weekly postings to social media.





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Facilitator Guide:

As a facilitator you will:

- Offer a welcoming, respectful and confidential space for sacred sharing
- Lead a group without dominating
- Keeps people on topic and conversations on time
- Ensure each participant has a chance to speak
- Build a sense of community among members

You will do this by being genuine, respectful, and joyful ... in short, by being yourself. You got this! And you are not alone.

Below are some suggested comments and the agenda for a two-hour conversation. For small conversations, with six or fewer people, you may want to do two rounds of single-group conversations rather than breakouts. Please adjust timing and content to what works for your gathering.

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Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

In 2021 and 2022, Catholic faithful worldwide were invited to connect, listen, and share their experiences. These millions of conversations, including those in our diocese, were summarized in regional, national, and continental documents that formed the foundation for discussion at the Synod of Bishops in 2023.

Their discussions and discernment were summarized in a synthesis report released October 27, 2023.

Today/tonight we will continue our growth as a Synodal church with a conversation inspired by this synthesis report.

During the next two hours we will pray together, listen to each other, and share our experiences and ideas in relation to topics emerging from the Synod of Bishops. Our conversations shared here tonight are confidential. Summary notes will be taken; there will be no names or identifying information attached. The summary information will be submitted to



the diocese to be part of a two-page document for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. Conversations like this one will be hosted throughout the diocese during Lent.

Pope Francis in his launch of the Synod in 2021 indicated that Synodality was not simply a conversation, obligation, or document: Synodality is a living and ongoing process of connection and evolution, building relationships with ourselves and each other as we draw closer to God through the Scriptures and His Son, Jesus Christ
More importantly, we have this great opportunity of renewing relationships in our parishes and communities.

Thank you for journeying with us in our continued growth as a Synodal church.

Prayer for Sacred Listening:

*Dearest Lord, here we are, companions on the road,
we are gathered here today to listen to the voice of each other. Open our ears and think with our hearts
so that we may become a listening presence*

Scripture Reflection

(10 minutes)

Read The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35) followed by silent reflection

Questions and Small Group Discussions

(45 minutes)

Introduce selected topic(s) and questions, review the notetaking process, and invite table conversations. Circulate if desired, or participate in a small discussion.

Stretch Break

(10 minutes)

Invite wrapup of the table conversations and a brief break

Large Group Sharing

(35 minutes)

Invite each table to share highlights of their conversations. Note highlights and any new points raised on note sheets or a flip chart

Closing Remarks

(10 minutes)

Synodality is journeying together. Communication and connection are vital for any journey: knowing where we are and where we want to go, and knowing who we are journeying with and



will invite along the way. This conversation is an important step in the ongoing journey of our church and our faith. Thank you for being a part of it.

A reminder that notes from our conversation this evening will be submitted to the diocese for summary and submission to the CCCB and then the Synod Secretariat. Please be sure I have all the notes from your table. Thank you again, and safe travel home.

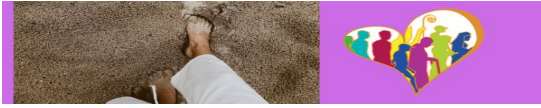
Closing Prayer

<https://cafod.org.uk/Pray/Prayer-resources/A-prayer-to-the-Creator>

Lord, Father of our human family, you created all human beings equal in dignity: pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter, dialogue, justice and peace. Move us to create healthier societies and a more dignified world, a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war.

May our hearts be open to all the peoples and nations of the earth. May we recognize the goodness and beauty that you have sown in each of us, and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects, and shared dreams.
Amen





Sample Program:

Welcome and Introductions

Prayer for Sacred Listening:

(Adapted from Michael Hansen, SJ, The First Spiritual Exercises, 2013)

Dearest Lord, here we are, companions on the road,
we are gathered here today to listen to the voice of each other. Open our ears and think with
our hearts
so that we may become a listening presence
to each other and enjoy the gift of our spiritual conversation. Give us the gift to know when not
to speak and
the acceptance to allow failures to be shared.
Give us the generosity to listen with openness,
the wisdom to understand what is heard.
The strength to be changed by what is shared. Amen

Scripture Reflection

The Road to Emmaus, Luke 24:13-35

Small Group Discussions

Large Group Sharing

Closing Remarks

Closing Prayer

<https://cafod.org.uk/Pray/Prayer-resources/A-prayer-to-the-Creator>

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Move us to create healthier societies and a more dignified world, a world without hunger,
poverty, violence and war.

May our hearts be open to all the peoples and nations of the earth. May we recognize the
goodness and beauty
that you have sown in each of us, and thus forge
bonds of unity, common projects, and shared dreams. Amen





Sample NoteTaking Form:

Note taker(s) will report recurring themes, points that struck a chord and/or inspired an original point of view, joys and challenges in this process of discernment, and any other points that stood out in the conversation. Forms and any other notes you wish to share should be collected by the facilitator at the end of the conversation for submission to the diocese.

Conversation Notes: Date and location	
Question :	
Question :	
Wrapup What are steps we can take to grow in "walking together"? How can the diocese help?	