

# Synod 2021 2023

For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission

## Diocese of Palmerston North Participation Booklet



**EHARA TAKU TOA, I TE TOA TAKITAHĪ,  
ĒNGARI E TOA TAKITINI.**

MY SUCCESS IS NOT MINE ALONE, IT IS OURS.  
THE GREATEST SUCCESS WE WILL HAVE IS FROM WORKING TOGETHER.





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22 October 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Jesus often invited people to follow him. Those who took up his offer truly experienced the life giving and transformative presence of God. In listening to him, really listening, they were challenged to live authentic, faithful lives and they were transformed by what they saw and heard. Eventually, they in turn, showed others the way to eternal life. As with all transformation, it's usually a gradual process. These early Christians were known as "*people of the Way*".

As with any journey, the way involves windy roads, hills, road works and the odd mountain. At your baptism you began this journey and became a member of Christ's body, the church. Today, you are being invited to step out again in faith, but in a new way. This new synodal process is giving you the opportunity to both listen and speak. To envision a new way of being church by listening to the voice of the Spirit and listening to others who are also seeking life. I have no doubt that the Holy Spirit has never stopped speaking to us, calling us to new ways of holiness and wholeness. You and I know that our church needs to change and so does our Pope. Having listened to the voice of the Spirit, Pope Francis has invited all the baptised to join him in this radically new synodal process.

I encourage you to grab this opportunity with both hands and make a difference. In this document you will discover questions which need answers. Our response to this synod needs to include the voices of those who are often not heard. They sometime include our own families.

This is not your first step but another significant step on your way to God, with God and with your brothers and sisters who share a desire to become active disciples in Communion, Participation and on Mission.

I wish you every good wish and blessing on the road,

Fr Craig Butler  
Local Administrator  
Diocese of Palmerston North

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# ADSUMUS SANCTE SPIRITUS

# PRAYER

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,  
as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us,  
make Yourself at home in our hearts;  
Teach us the way we must go  
and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;  
do not let us promote disorder.  
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path  
nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity  
so that we may journey together to eternal life  
and not stray from the way of truth  
and what is right.

All this we ask of You,  
who are at work in every place and time,  
in the communion of the Father and the Son,  
forever and ever.

Amen.



# #ListeningChurch

Pope Francis has invited us all to embark on a journey together. Through listening and discernment grounded in the Holy Spirit, the entire people of God are called to contribute to a process by which the Church deepens in understanding of mission and looks toward the future.

A Synod, which is the process by which we will begin this important work, is not just a convening of Bishops reflecting on a particular topic and advising the Pope. A Synod is a journey of discernment, in which we are called to pray and reflect upon the Holy Spirit's work in the Church. Through our listening and our sharing, we will seek to understand what the Spirit's will is saying in the topic being discussed – and thus, for the Church.

For the 2023 Ordinary Synod of Bishops, that topic is synodality.

Synodality is something that in many ways we are still in the process of understanding and experiencing. As Thomas O'Loughlin said in a recent article in *Tui Motu*, if you don't really know what the word means, "that is a good place to start because no one knows exactly what it means." He goes on to say that "when we want to be creative, to discover new solutions and face into the future as a challenge knowing that the Spirit is with us, then it is best NOT to start from a very fixed and defined point."

Synodality is about discerning how the Spirit is moving through and with the People of God, so that we may continue to fulfill our mission to evangelise in the world. Thomas O'Loughlin talks about synodality being a "dream-like, ill-defined image – a sketch or a general pointer" which will help us, through thought, discussion and prayer to discover where we are being called.

Cardinal John said in his homily for the Opening Mass of the Synod on 17 October, that this Synod is very different from any other he has been part of in the past. He quoted Pope Francis, encouraging us to take part in the adventure of this journey and to "Read, listen, share, dialogue with others, have your say in the consultation process" that is now underway.



**For a Synodal Church:**  
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# SYNOD 2021 - 2023

# THE OVERALL PROCESS

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This synodal journey has commenced both in the Vatican and in the local churches, starting with the Official Opening with the Holy Father in the Vatican on 9-10 October 2021.

This will then be followed by an Official Opening in each diocese on Sunday 17 October 2021.

In September 2021, the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops published a Preparatory Document, accompanied by a Questionnaire and a 'Vademecum' (Handbook), with proposals for consultation in each diocese. These documents have been sent to all the dioceses around the world.

## DIOCESAN PHASE

### OCTOBER 2021 - JUNE 2022

The objective of this phase is to consult the People of God so that the synodal process is carried out through listening to all. This will primarily be done by groups and individuals making submissions to the diocese in the month of November. This consultation will conclude with a pre-synodal meeting, which will be the culmination of diocesan discernment.

## NATIONAL / CONTINENTAL PHASE

### SEPTEMBER 2021 - MARCH 2023

At the conclusion of the diocesan phase, each diocese will submit their contributions to their local Bishops' Conference. A period of discernment will begin for the bishops gathered to listen to what the Spirit has inspired in the churches entrusted to them. Their synthesis will then be sent to the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops along with the contributions of each of the diocese. Each local Bishops' Conference synthesis will feed into a pre-Synodal Continental gathering before March 2023.

## UNIVERSAL PHASE

### OCTOBER 2023

The documents from the seven continents will then become part of the 'Instrumentum Laboris', or 'working document' for the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October 2023.

... THE PURPOSE OF THE SYNOD IS NOT TO PRODUCE DOCUMENTS, BUT "TO PLANT DREAMS, DRAW FORTH PROPHECIES AND VISIONS, ALLOW HOPE TO FLOURISH, INSPIRE TRUST, BIND UP WOUNDS, WEAVE TOGETHER RELATIONSHIPS, AWAKEN A DAWN OF HOPE, LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER AND CREATE A BRIGHT RESOURCEFULNESS THAT WILL ENLIGHTEN MINDS, WARM HEARTS, GIVE STRENGTH TO OUR HANDS ...  
(PD32)

## DIOCESAN PHASE

Local churches and groups gather to discern and respond to the synod questions. These responses are submitted to the diocese.

## CONTINENTAL PHASE

Submissions are synthesised into a single New Zealand document, outlining responses received from each diocese. This document is then combined into an Oceania document and submitted to the Synod of Bishops.

## UNIVERSAL PHASE

Each document from the 7 continents is brought before the Synod of Bishops, where they discern the people's voice to decide the direction of the Church moving forward.





# The Diocesan Phase

Everyone in the Diocese of Palmerston North is invited to participate in the first phase of this global Synod consultation process.

This booklet gives some background information on the fundamental question of the Synod and the ten main themes being presented for reflection.

“...WE ARE ALL INVITED TO  
LISTEN TO ONE ANOTHER IN ORDER  
TO HEAR THE PROMPTINGS OF THE  
HOLY SPIRIT, WHO COMES TO  
GUIDE OUR HUMAN EFFORTS,  
BREATHING LIFE AND VITALITY  
INTO THE CHURCH AND LEADING US  
INTO DEEPER COMMUNION FOR OUR  
MISSION IN THE WORLD.”  
(VAD 1.2)





# DISCERNMENT

Whether the response to this document is from an individual or a group, it should be the product of prayerful discernment. Discernment is a process of making decisions or arriving at answers in a prayerful way. Many of you will be familiar with it in the context of The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits.

Pope Francis often talks about discernment:

*"Discernment is one of the things that worked inside St. Ignatius. For him it is an instrument of struggle in order to know the Lord and follow him more closely... Discernment is always done in the presence of the Lord, looking at the signs, listening to the things that happen, the feeling of the people, especially the poor." (Pope Francis, August 2013)*

Father James Martin SJ explains the essence of discernment:

*"At heart, the process begins with the belief that God wants a person, or a group, to make good, healthy and life-giving decisions; and through the 'discernment of spirits,' that is, sorting out what is coming from God and what is not, one gains clarity about the best path. God therefore both wants and enables individuals and groups to arrive at good decisions."*

Our relationship with God is at the heart of discernment. God respects our freedom by acting very gently with us. This means that we need to continually fine-tune our listening to God. Listening to God amid the other interior and exterior voices in our lives is discernment.

How do we know that we are listening to God and following the movement of the Spirit within ourselves or in a group? Ask, "Am I at peace with this? Am I at ease now, especially if what I had previously thought was the best course of action is not what I now think? Or am I uneasy or anxious?"

A good discernment process brings clarity and inner peace. If there is unease or anxiety, personal issues are getting in the way.



# GROUP DISCERNMENT

## *A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION*

A suitable method for group dialogue which resonates with the principles of synodality is the Spiritual Conversation method, which promotes active participation, attentive listening, reflective speaking, and spiritual discernment.

Participants form small groups of about 6-7 persons from diverse backgrounds. This method takes about an hour and comprises three rounds. It is a prayerful process.

In the first round, after a time of silent prayer everyone takes turns to share the fruit of his or her prayer, in relation to one of the reflection questions circulated beforehand (pp. 14-18). There is no discussion in this round and all participants simply listen deeply to each person and attend to how the Holy Spirit is moving within oneself, within the person speaking, and in the group as a whole. This is followed by a time of silence to note one's thoughts and feelings.

In the second round, participants share what struck them most in the first round that someone else has shared, and what moved them during the time of silence. Some dialogue can also occur, and the same spiritual attentiveness is maintained. Once again this is followed by a time of silence.

Finally in the third round participants reflect on what seems to be resonating in the conversation and what moved them most deeply. New insights and even unresolved questions are also noted. Spontaneous prayers of gratitude can conclude the conversation. Usually each small group will have a facilitator and note-taker.

Once the group dialogue has taken place, participants should review and share about their experience of the process within their small group.

- How was their experience?
- What were the ups and downs?
- What new and refreshing insights might they have discovered?
- What have they learned about the synodal way of proceeding?
- How was God present and at work during their time together?

Participants should then decide on the feedback they wish to communicate. The guiding questions for the diocesan synthesis as outlined (pp. 16-23) can be used as a basis for this feedback at the local level.



# INDIVIDUAL DISCERNMENT

**If you wish to make an individual response, then this simple process may help you develop clarity about what you want to say.**

Take some silent time to pray about how you will arrive at your response. Don't focus on the theme initially. Instead seek the freedom to follow where God leads, to let go of any bias or negative feelings, and ask for the patience to allow your response to evolve over time.

After a time of prayer, reflect upon the words:

**"A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together".**

- What is my first response to these words?
- Am I led towards any particular theme?

**When you come to consider one of the themes, be willing to first let thoughts and feelings which may be influencing your response to surface:**

- How do I feel about this theme?
- Are my feelings the result of my experience? Are they influenced by other people?
- What happens if I bring my imagination into play?
- What is God saying to me about this theme?

Negative thoughts and emotions or feelings of anxiety triggered by the theme get in the way of hearing what God is saying. We know we are listening to God when our thoughts are refreshing, peaceful, generate new inspiration and ideas, and direct us beyond ourselves.

Make notes as you reflect for use in preparing your input to the consultation. Share your response in a group or send it directly to the Diocese using the online tool (p.14).



# #ListeningChurch

## HOW YOU CAN RESPOND

Input to the participation process is welcome from both individuals and from groups. Your response can cover all the themes, just one theme or a selection of them. The questions accompanying each of the themes can be used as a starting point or helpful guideline. Your response to the theme should not be limited by the questions.

There are multiple ways you can respond:

### ONLINE SURVEY

Visit [pndiocese.org.nz/synod](https://pndiocese.org.nz/synod) and follow the link to the online response tool.

### E-MAIL

Download the Word document "Synod participation response" from our Diocesan website. To do this go to [pndiocese.org.nz/synod](https://pndiocese.org.nz/synod)

Email your response in Word format to [synod@pndiocese.org.nz](mailto:synod@pndiocese.org.nz)

### POSTAL RESPONSE

Handwrite or type your response to the questions and post it to:

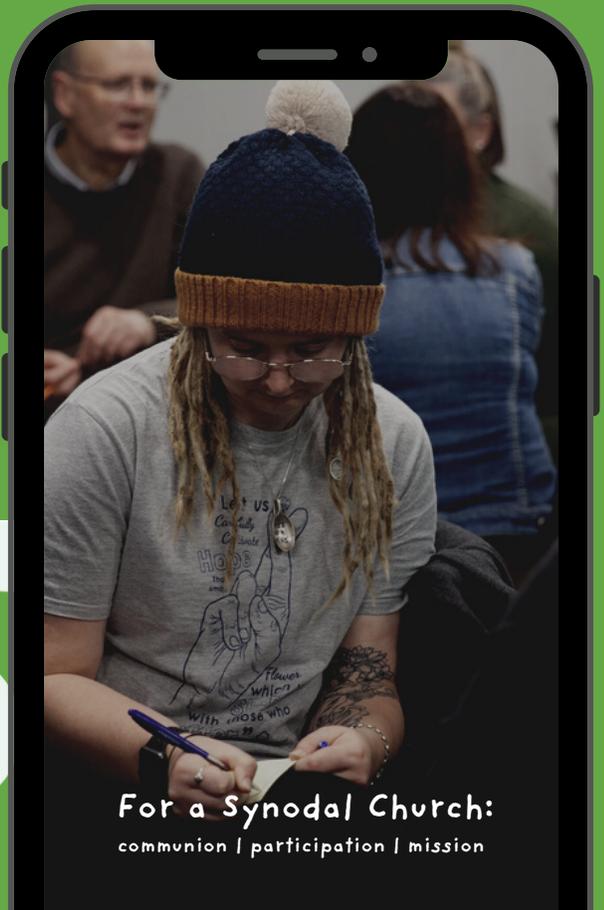
SYNOD 2021-23

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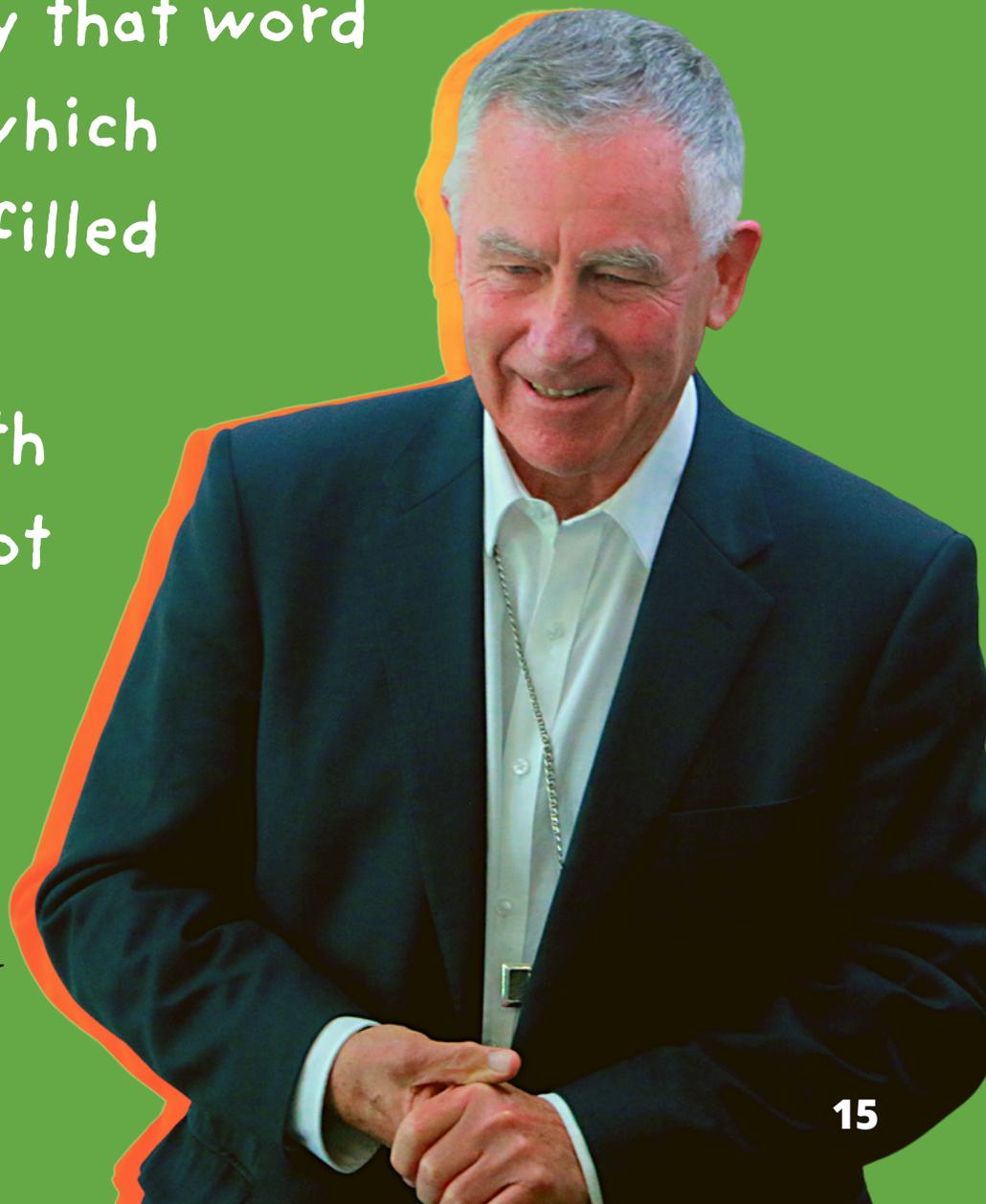
**For a Synodal Church:**  
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"Do you want to be part of this great adventure? ... Trust in God, move forward with courage, build unity through discernment, discover and help bring about God's dream for us, be positive and enthusiastic.

Take seriously that word 'enthusiasm' which means 'to be filled with God!'

And filled with God, we cannot go wrong."

**Cardinal  
John Dew**





# Synod

## Fundamental Question

We've provided some suggestions about how you might respond in the previous sections. The next part of this booklet provides some specific themes and questions to help further support your response, both as a group and as an individual.



what are we reflecting on?

# The fundamental question

The Synod poses the following fundamental question:

**A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together."**

**How is this "journeying together" happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together"?**

In order to respond, we are invited to:

**RECALL OUR EXPERIENCES:**

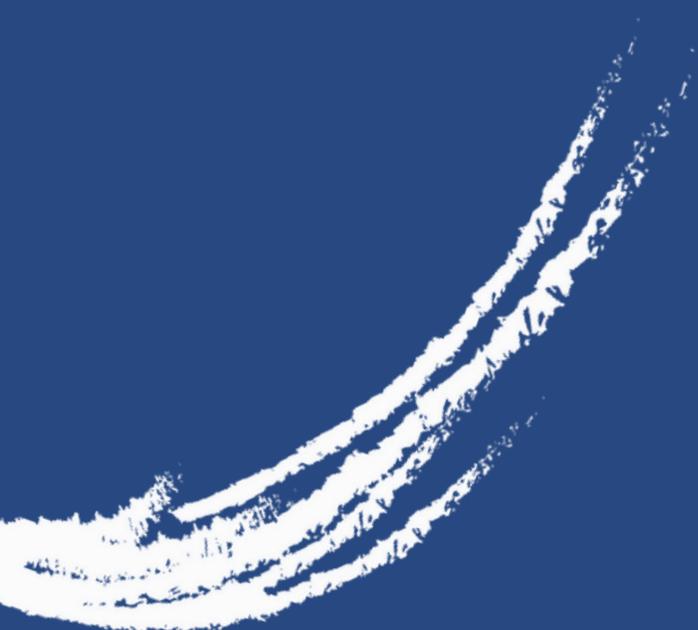
Ask ourselves, what experiences in our local Church come to mind when we talk about journeying together?

**REREAD THESE EXPERIENCES MORE DEEPLY:**

What joys did they bring? What difficulties and obstacles have they involved? What hurts has the journey involved? What insights have emerged?

**GATHER THE FRUITS TO SHARE:**

Where, in these experiences, can the Spirit be heard or seen? What is the Spirit asking of us? What are we doing well? What needs to change? What steps do we need to take? Where do we agree? What paths are opening up for us?



# Synod

## Main Themes

The following ten themes highlight significant aspects of our 'lived synodality' (PD, 30). In responding to these questions, it is helpful to remember that "journeying together" occurs in two deeply interconnected ways. First, we journey together with one another as the People of God. Next, we journey together as the People of God with the entire human family. These two perspectives enrich one another and are helpful for our common discernment towards deeper communion and more fruitful mission.

Input to the participation process is welcome from both individuals and from groups. Your response can cover all the themes, just one theme or a selection of them. The questions accompanying each of the following ten themes can be used as a starting point or helpful guideline. Your response to the theme should not be limited by the questions.

# 1. THE JOURNEYING COMPANIONS

**A truly synodal Church walks together, side by side, along the same road towards renewal in the Spirit and the good of all people.**

- How do you feel we as Catholics are doing at walking side-by-side?
- Who do you feel is included/welcome on the church's local journey?
- Who is not included or welcomed?

# 2. LISTENING

**Listening is the first step - it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.**

- How good are Catholics at listening?
- Who do we need to listen to more?  
(Consider – women, young people, lay people, those on the margins of society, minority groups, the socially discarded and excluded etc.)
- What stops us from listening more carefully?





# 3. SPEAKING OUT

Everyone is invited to speak boldly and courageously in freedom, truth, and love.

- How good are we as Catholics at speaking out in public?
- How do we say what is important to us as Catholics?
- What helps or hinders our public visibility?

# 4. CELEBRATING

**"Walking together" is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.**

- Are our Catholic gatherings achieving their purpose for our people?
- How does our gathering for prayer (including Mass) meet people's needs?
- How do they fail to meet people's needs?

# 5. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MISSION

Synodality ('walking together') serves the mission of the Church, in which we are all called to participate.

- Do we as Catholics take this mission seriously?
- How exactly do we as Church members spread the Good News of Jesus Christ?
- What stops us from being active in mission?

# 6. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Dialogue requires perseverance and patience but it enables mutual understanding.

- As Catholics, how good are we at conversation — both listening and sharing?
- Good conversation (dialogue) leads to collaboration — how, and how well, do we collaborate as Catholics in our local community?
- In what ways could we dialogue and collaborate better with others in society (e.g. in politics, economics, culture, civil society, and those who live in poverty?)



# 7.

## WITH OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

**The dialogue between Christians of different denominations, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.**

- How well do we as Catholics know our sisters and brothers in other churches?
- What do we share and how do we journey with Christians from other churches (denominations)?
- Why don't we do more together?

# 8.

## AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

**A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.**

- Catholics aim to balance authority and governance with teamwork and co-responsibility. How well do we achieve this?
- How could we balance these better?
- How do we encourage lay involvement, participation and leadership?



# 9. DISCERNING AND DECIDING

In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.

- How well do you feel we do this?
- What methods or processes do Catholic communities use to include people in discernment and decision-making?
- What do you think we should do to improve our efforts in this?

# 10. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning.

- To what extent do you find Catholics are open to change and new learning?
- How do we as a Catholic community form our people to listen, participate and be open to change?
- Have you found Church leaders to be willing to listen, participate and remain open to new ways?





“It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.”

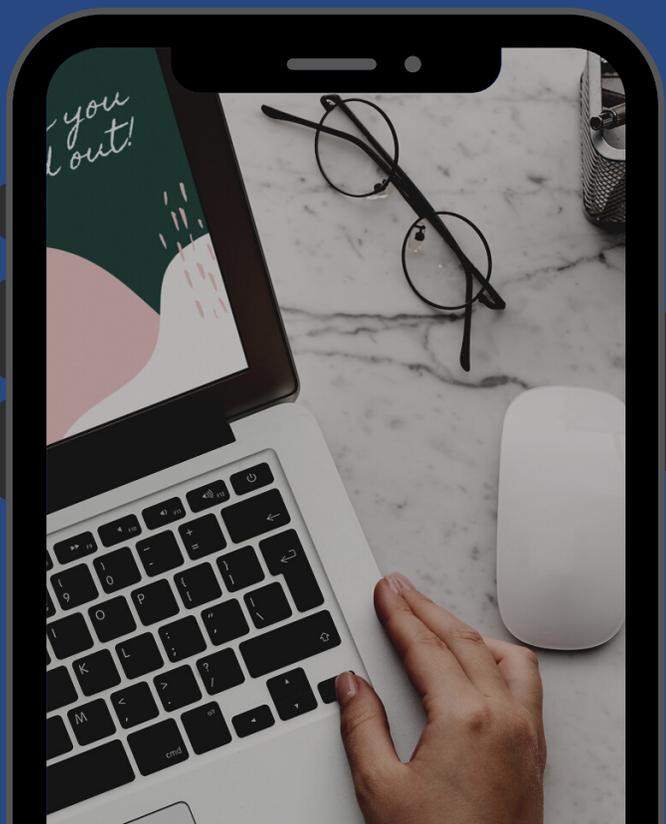
**Pope Francis**

# #ListeningChurch

We've tried to provide questions that are simple to encourage your discernment.

Please remember that you do not have to answer every question and the themes and questions are provided as a starting point more than anything.

If you are looking for more a more comprehensive list of questions to prompt your discernment, these are available at [pndiocese.org.nz/synod](http://pndiocese.org.nz/synod) – download the **Full Theme Question Document** or you can scan the QR code below.



# SCRIPTURE FOR REFLECTION

The Preparatory Document explores two "images" from Scripture to inspire our journey of building a synodal church.

The first image is **Jesus, the Crowd, the Apostles**. You can read the reflection on this "image" in the Preparatory Document (PD, 17-21).

The second is **A Double Dynamic of Conversion**, looking at the story of Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10). You can read the reflection on this Scripture in the Preparatory Document (PD, 22-24).

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Other key passages of Scripture referenced throughout the Preparatory Document focus on the important role of the Spirit. Some of these are included below.

John 3:8

John 14:6

John 16:13

Luke 2:19, 51

John 14:17

John 14:25-26

John 15:26-27

John 16:12-15



Window from the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit

Head to [pndiocese.org.nz/synodscripture](https://pndiocese.org.nz/synodscripture) or scan the above code for full text of these Scriptures.

# AVOIDING PITFALLS

As on any journey, we need to be aware of possible pitfalls that could hamper our progress during this time of synodality. The following are common temptations that must be avoided in order to promote the vitality and fruitfulness of the Synodal Process.

1. The temptation to want to lead ourselves instead of being led by God.
2. The temptation to focus on ourselves and our immediate concerns.
3. The temptation to only see "problems."
4. The temptation to focus only on structures.
5. The temptation not to look beyond the visible confines of the Church.
6. The temptation to lose focus on the objectives of the Synodal Process.
7. The temptation of conflict and division.
8. The temptation to treat the Synod as a kind of a parliament.
9. The temptation to listen only to those who are already involved in Church activities.

*(Vademecum, 2.4)*



# a word of gratitude

A sincere word of gratitude to all those who organize, coordinate, and participate in this Synodal Process. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we make up the living stones through whom God builds up the Church that he desires for the third millennium (1 Peter 2:5).

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles and Mother of the Church, intercede for us as we journey together on the path that God sets before us.

As in the Upper Room at Pentecost, may her maternal care and intercession accompany us as we build up our communion with one another and carry out our mission in the world.

With her, we say together as the People of God:  
"Let it be with me according to your word"  
(Luke 1:38).



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ĒNGARI E TOA TAKITINI.**

**MY SUCCESS IS NOT MINE ALONE, IT IS OURS.**

**THE GREATEST SUCCESS WE WILL HAVE IS FROM WORKING TOGETHER.**

TE ROHE  
PIHOPA O TE  
PAPAIOEA



DIOCESE OF  
PALMERSTON  
NORTH