

Ways to adapt the consultation questions

The following are some suggestions on how the consultation questions can be posed in simple and engaging ways that help people understand and explore the various dimensions of synodality. Each diocese or group of participants might want to focus on certain questions in particular, depending on its context. Often, focusing on a smaller number of questions might be more fruitful than attempting to cover too many questions while forfeiting depth in reflection and dialogue. The opportunity to share and listen to personal stories from people's real-life experiences is also an important aspect of engaging with these questions.

1. Companions on the journey

- Who are the companions you value most in the Church? Why? What does companionship mean for you? In what ways can the circles of companionship grow further?
- Share about a personal experience that made you feel a real sense of belonging in the Church. What happened and how did you feel? What made it possible? Or, share about a time when you felt that you were left out or that you did not belong. What made you feel that way? How can things be better?
- Who are the people who seem closer together in the Church and who are those who seem further apart? What do you think has caused this situation? How can we build better bridges in the community? How can we better include people at the margins?
- In what ways have people in your Church community been good companions to one another and to those beyond the Church? In what ways have you been a good companion to others?
- Have you ever distanced yourself from the Church community or do you know someone who has? What are some reasons? What would make you (or that person) come closer to the Church community?

2. Listening

- Who do you think are the people that the Church is listening to? Whose voices are not being heard enough? Who do you think are the various groups of people that the Church needs to listen to better?
- In what ways are the voices of the minorities being heard? How about specific groups such as the youth, women, migrants, etc?

- Do you feel that you are being listened to in the Church? Why or why not? Share a recent concrete experience, whether positive or not.
- What enables you to listen to others? What might be some barriers or prejudices that prevent you from listening well?
- How can the Church do better to listen to everyone? How can we listen better to one another, especially those who have a different view from us?
- What are the “signs of the times” that we need to pay more attention to? What do we hear when we listen to the voice of the poor and the voice of creation?

3. Speaking out

- Do you know how, where, or to whom you can share your views when you have something to say in your Church community?
- Do you speak up regularly? Why or why not?
- What prevents people in your Church community from coming forward to make their views known? What helps them to do so?
- How can we promote honest and responsible communication in the Church and in society?

4. Celebration

- What are the communal prayers and liturgical activities that you participate in most frequently? How do they make a difference in your life?
- What do you find most meaningful or life-giving in the liturgies of your local Church community? What do you find less meaningful or life-giving? How can they be made better?
- In your opinion, to what extent does your Church group or local Church community make decisions in a prayerful way based on the Word of God? Do you think the life and mission of your Church community has been based well on prayer and communal liturgy? Why or why not?
- In what ways are the liturgies in your Church community, especially the celebration of the Eucharist, inclusive and participatory? What further improvements are needed?

5. Sharing responsibility for our common mission

- What do you consider to be your mission or purpose in life? How did



you discover this and what or who helped you to discover it?

- How do you find meaning in your daily life and work? In what way do you feel that you are part of the mission of Christ? Share about an experience that really made you feel this way.
- What is the Holy Spirit saying to you about your mission and vocation as a disciple of Christ? What help do you receive in discerning and following this?
- What do you think hinders people from being active missionary disciples?
- How does your local church community currently assist people to understand the Christian mission and discover their particular role in it? What can be done to help people discern and live their mission? In what ways do you collaborate with one another in your commitment to the Christian mission?

6. Dialogue in the Church and society

- Have you ever encountered an experience of meaningful dialogue between diverse peoples or groups in your Church? Share about this experience. What enabled the dialogue to be fruitful?
- What do you think promotes or hinders dialogue in your local Church and society? What are the various groups of people who need to dialogue with each other more?
- How are conflicts or disagreements usually handled in your community? Share about some striking incidents that come to mind. What can we learn from them? How can we promote better dialogue in the Church and society?
- To what extent is there fruitful dialogue and collaboration among clergy, laity, and religious in your local Church community? What can be improved?
- Share about your experiences in dialogue, if any, with people of other faiths or with non-believers. What do you learn from these experiences? How can the Church dialogue better with other religions and with the various sectors of society?

7. Ecumenism

- What interactions does your local church community have with other Christian traditions? Do you participate regularly in these interactions? Share about your experience.
- How would you describe the relations among the Catholic and other Christian churches in your local community? What words or images would you use? What promotes or hinders the dialogue and collaboration among these churches?
- What are the joys and fruits, or challenges and difficulties, in the relations among different Christian denominations? How can we walk together better?

8. Authority and participation

- How and by whom are pastoral plans, goals, and new ideas usually developed in your local Church community? Have you ever been part of this process?
- What images come to mind when you think of authority and leadership in your Church? How would you describe the model of authority and leadership? Share a personal experience, if any. What are the areas for improvement?
- What are the current ways in which lay people participate in the life and mission of the Church? In your opinion, what proportion of lay people do you think are participating actively? What promotes or hinders their participation?
- Do you feel you can come forward or take action easily if you want to do something in the church? What helps or hinders you? What image would you use to describe your place in the Church? Why?
- What can the clergy do to encourage more participation in the life and mission of the church? What can the lay people do?
- What are some good practices in your Church that promote co-responsibility? Share a memorable experience you have had, if any. What practices can be improved?

9. Discerning and deciding

- How are decisions usually made in your Church community? Share some personal experiences, whether positive or otherwise.
- What are some good examples of collaboration in decision-making which you have seen in your Church community?
- Have you ever been asked for your opinions or suggestions regarding a decision in your Church community? From your observation, how much consultation and discernment usually occurs in decision-making in your Church community? To what extent do the current ways of making major decisions promote listening to the whole People of God? How can this be improved?
- How much do you know about communal discernment or about ways to listen together as a community to the promptings of the Holy Spirit? Have you ever been a part of such discernment? What do you think promotes or hinders it?
- In your opinion, how much transparency and accountability are there in decision-making in your local Church? What helps or hinders it? How can this be improved?

10. Forming ourselves in synodality

- How do people in your local Church community currently learn to dialogue, collaborate, and participate in mission?
- What are the current efforts in lay leadership formation in your local Church, or formation in communal discernment? What needs to be improved?
- What are the current strengths and weaknesses in the formation of clergy, religious, and laity towards promoting communion, participation, and mission?

- How can formation be improved for leaders and those who are in positions of authority in the Church so as to promote synodality? What factors in the wider culture influence this?
- In your local Church culture, is there a strong desire for learning? What promotes or hinders this?
- What formation would you be most keen to have for yourself?

Additional suggestions for pastoral leaders

All pastoral leaders are encouraged to participate in the Synodal Process of listening and discernment. In addition to the above questions, here are further suggestions for participants who are pastoral leaders, whether clergy, religious, or lay.

- In exercising leadership and authority in your ministry, with whom do you tend to consult more closely or frequently, if at all? Why? On what issues do you tend to consult more?
- What helps or hinders you in consultation or in inviting wider collaboration and participation? What fruits have you experienced? What challenges have you faced?
- In your pastoral journey, do you remember a time when you experienced the process and fruits of synodality in a joyful and meaningful way? Share about this experience.
- What attitudes and practices have enabled you to exercise a more synodal leadership? In what way has this been life-giving? What “synodal conversions” do you feel called towards now?
- What practices or structures have promoted synodality more effectively in your Church community? What improvements or changes need to be made?

* *Note:* In the *Vademecum* and all of the accompanying appendices and resources, the term “diocese” refers to local Churches in general, and can be substituted with the terms *eparchy*, *ordinariate*, or any other equivalent ecclesial body.



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