



General Secretariat for the Synod of the Bishops



Suggestions for the Liturgy to celebrate the Opening of the Synod in local Churches

Sunday, October 17, 2021

The opening celebration for the Synod on October 17 in all dioceses could be a Eucharist, but it could also take another form: a Liturgy of the Word, a Pilgrimage, a Prayer service, etc. In this document, you will find:

1. The Objectives of the Liturgical Celebration to open the diocesan phase of the Synodal Process;
2. General ideas and suggestions for the Opening Celebration;
3. The Prayer of the Synod *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*
4. A proposal for the forms to be used in a Eucharistic Celebration;
5. A proposal for the structure of a Liturgy of the Word;
6. A proposal for a Procession during the Liturgy and/or a Pilgrimage;
7. Another proposal for the Prayers of the Faithful;
8. A proposal for the Blessing.

1. The Objectives of the Liturgical Celebration to Open the Diocesan Phase of the Synodal Process

- To focus on the **Word of God** and to **solemnly enthrone the Word of God** in a procession, as at the opening of every Council and Synod.
- To invoke the guidance of the **Holy Spirit** to lead the diocesan phase of the Synodal Process.
- To **entrust the Synodal Process to God**, through the maternal intercession of **Mary, Queen of the Apostles and Mother of the Church**.
- To **celebrate the beginning of the Synodal Process** in union with **all local Churches** throughout the entire world.
- To **gather** representatives of the **People of God** in the diocese in a **spirit of communion**.
- To **inspire participation** in the diocesan phase of the Synodal Process.
- To be **sent out** on the pilgrim path of the Synodal journey as a **missionary Church**.

2. General ideas and suggestions for the Opening Celebration

- To emphasize the **importance of the Holy Spirit**, the central role of **Pentecost** in the life of the Church, and the **pneumatological** aspect of the Synodal Process, it is suggested that the Liturgy be inspired by the **Vigil of Pentecost**. The **Votive Mass of Holy Spirit** can be celebrated, and the Holy Spirit can be invoked through the singing of the *Veni Creator Spiritus*. The *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus* prayer can be used to mark the opening of this Synod, asking the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the diocese and the whole Church.
- Moments of **communal prayer** or **common silence** can be observed as helpful ways of being attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit together.
- An **image** or an **icon** from Tradition can be utilized to accompany the two-year journey of the Synodal Process (e.g. the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Jesus accompanying the disciples on the road to Emmaus).
- **Symbolic images and actions** can be used to show the **unity in diversity of the Body of Christ**. The main point of the Synod is *journeying together*, involving all the faithful and all ministries in the Church.
- At the end of the liturgy, **symbolic gestures** can be used to send the assembly out on the synodal path of **walking together, journeying with one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit**.
- **It is important to underline the three key elements of this Synod: Communion, Participation, and Mission.**
 - ➔ To underline **Communion**, key messages to transmit include: “We are spread out across our entire diocese but God unites us as one”; “The aim is not for all of us to be the same, but to walk forward together, sharing a common path and embracing our diversity”; “The communion that God builds in our midst is stronger than any divisions”; “Amidst our many differences, we are united in our common baptism, as members of the Body of Christ.” To manifest Communion on the various levels of the local Church, **parishes, movements, and different communities from across the diocese can be highlighted**.
 - ➔ To underline **Participation**, **the lay faithful should play a vital role** in the liturgy. Efforts should also be made to include those who may sometimes be excluded, including members of other Christian denominations and other religions, people who experience poverty and marginalization, people who live with a handicap, young people, women, etc.
 - ➔ To underline **Mission**, the many gifts and charisms of the People of God in the diocese can be emphasized. Key messages to convey are: “Every Christian has a vital role to play in the mission of the Church”; “All the baptized are living stones in building up the Body of Christ”; “No one is excluded from the joy of the Gospel”; “Lay people have a special mission in witnessing to the Gospel in all parts of human society”; “As disciples of Jesus, we are leaven in the midst of humanity so that the kingdom of God may rise across the entire world.”
- After the opening ceremony in Rome on October 10, 2021
 - ➔ There are **7 days between the opening ceremony in Rome and the opening ceremony in the local Churches** (October 17, 2021). As a spiritual preparation for the opening of the Synod in each local Church, you are invited to use this time as **7 days of prayer for specific intentions related to the Synod**.

3. The Prayer of the Synod: *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*

This prayer can be widely used throughout the diocesan phase of the Synodal Process. It can likewise be incorporated into the liturgical celebration to open the Synod in local Churches on October 17. Attributed to St. Isidore of Seville (560-636), it has been traditionally used at Councils and Synods for hundreds of years. The version below was specifically designed for the Church's Synodal journey from 2021 to 2023.

*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.*

4. Proposal for the forms used in a Eucharistic celebration

Where the local Churches decide to open the Synodal Process with a Eucharistic celebration, they might use one of the following forms:

- *Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit*

OR

- *Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions*

I. *For Holy Church*

- *Formula A: For the Church*
- *Formula 5: For the Particular Church*

OR

V. *For a Council of Synod*

Oratio universalis:

Priest's Introduction

As we await with longing
The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,
dear brothers and sisters,
let us with renewed devotion beseech his mercy,
that, as he came into the world
to bring the Good News to the poor
and to heal the contrite of heart,
so in our own time, also,
he may bring salvation to all in need.¹

Prayers of the Faithful

1. For God's holy Church:
That it may be a light to the nations and the universal sacrament of salvation,
walking with all peoples to the Kingdom of God.²
2. For Francis our Pope, N. our Bishop, and the holy, faithful People of God in the
Diocese of N.:
that the celebration of this Synod may help us to discern God's will and to boldly carry
it out.³
3. For all civil and public authorities:
that they may always seek the common good, acting with justice and integrity.
4. For the sick, the lonely, the oppressed, and the suffering:
That they may never be discarded, but rather treasured and cared for as the face of
Christ in a suffering world.
5. For ourselves, gathered here:
That this Synodal Process may lead us ever deeper into the communion of the Church,
foster our participation in it, and equip us to go out on mission.⁴

Priest's prayer

O God, our refuge and our strength,
hear the prayers of your Church,
for you yourself are the source of all devotion,
and grant, we pray, that what we ask in faith
we may truly obtain.
Through Christ our Lord.⁵

¹ Cf. *Missale Romanum*, Appendix V, n.3.

² Cf. *Collecta Formulario 'A' Pro Ecclesia*

³ Cf. *Super oblata Pro Concilio vel Synodo*

⁴ Cf. *Titolo del processo sinodale*.

⁵ Cf. *Missale Romanum*, Appendix V, n.1.

5. Proposal for the structure of the Liturgy of the Word

Beginning at the Baptistry

Opening song
Sign of the cross
Greeting
Monition
Renewal of Baptismal Promises
Asperges (Sprinkling rite)

Start of the Procession towards the Church

The Book of the Gospels precedes the Procession
Processional hymn of the Litany of the Saints
Following the Book of the Gospels, a Marian icon is carried,
while a processional hymn is sung.

The Book of the Gospels will be placed on the altar and the Marian icon near the altar.

Collect Prayer

Proclamation of the Word

First Reading: Acts 10:1-48; or Acts 2:1-11
Responsorial Psalm: Ps 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34; or Ps 33:10-15
Second Reading: Gal 5:1-24; or 1 Cor 12:4-11; or 1 Cor 12:12-26; or 1 Cor 12:27-31
Gospel Acclamation
Gospel: Lk 24:13-35; or Mt 5:13-16; or Jn 16:12-15; or Lk 8:4-15; or Lk 8:16-18a, 19-21
Homily

After the homily follows a moment of silent prayer.

Letting the Word of God Resonate

Short testimonies can be delivered here by diverse members of the People of God. After each testimony, a lamp is carried in front of the Marian icon. Between each testimony, a short canon to the Holy Spirit can be sung. The *Veni Creator Spiritus* can likewise be sung and the *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus* prayer can be said. The testimonies and the invocation of the Holy Spirit are followed by the Prayers of the Faithful, followed by the Lord's Prayer (Our Father). The testimonies could also be substituted for a brief time for prayerful sharing on the Word of God that has been proclaimed, in small groups of 2-5 persons.

Conclusion

Blessing
Handing over a sign of the mission that symbolizes the beginning of the synod
Dismissal

Each parish/community (or their representatives), having received a sign of the mission of the Synod, goes to the Marian icon and takes the lamp that their parish/community will light during the Synodal journey.

6. Proposal for a Procession during the Liturgy and/or a Pilgrimage

- It is fitting to organize a **Procession**, to represent the **journey** as the **starting point of the Synodal Process**.
 - The Procession can be **to the baptismal font as a reminder of our common Baptism**, which unites us all together as children of God called to holiness.
 - The Procession can include the **Renewal of Baptismal Promises** and the **Litany of the Saints**.
- Organizing a **Pilgrimage** to an important pilgrimage site in the diocese is a symbolic way of **journeying together** to embark upon the Synodal Process. The Pilgrimage can be accompanied by a Liturgy of the Word or Eucharistic Celebration.

7. Other proposal for the Prayers of the Faithful

A prayer inspired by the 10 thematic nuclei of the Preparatory Document (§30)

For the Church. That we may journey as companions, side by side one another on the same road.

We pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For listening ears. That our hearts and minds be open to listening to others without prejudice.

We pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For the gift of speaking out. That we be encouraged in this Synod journey to speak with courage and *parrhesia*,⁶ integrating freedom, truth, and love.

We pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For a Church that celebrates. That our journey together in the coming months will be based on listening together to the Word of God and the celebration on the Eucharist in the communion of the People of God.

We pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For our participation in the Mission of Christ. That through our Synodal journey together, we may grow in our shared responsibility of the mission that is entrusted to us.

We pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For true dialogue in the Church and in Society. That through a path of perseverance, patience, and mutual understanding, we may be attentive to the experience of persons and peoples.

We pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For the unity of Christians. That dialogue between Christians of different denominations, united by one Baptism, may radiate with new brightness on this Synodal journey.

We pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For the exercise of authority and participation in the People of God. That the Synodal roots of the Church will bear fruit in new ways of being at the service of one another at all levels of the Body of Christ.

We pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For our discernment to be led by the Holy Spirit. That all decisions made on this Synodal path may be discerned through a consensus that flows from our common obedience to the Holy Spirit.

We pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For a spirituality of journeying together. That we may be formed as disciples of Christ, as families, as communities, and as human beings, through our experience of this Synodal journey.

We pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

⁶ The biblical term “parrhesia” (cf. Acts 4:13; Eph 3:12; Heb 3:6) can be substituted for “boldness” for pastoral reasons.

8. Proposal for the Blessing

We are the Body of Christ, and each one of us is a member of it. You who are His People, may the Lord keep you in the unity of His love so that the world may come to believe!

The choir and the assembly all respond: AMEN! AMEN! AMEN!

We all are called to holiness! You, the religious, the lay faithful, and the entire People of God, encourage one another to live according to the light of the Gospel!

The choir and the assembly respond: AMEN! AMEN! AMEN!

The Body of Christ is built up through diverse charisms and ministries. You, deacons, priests, bishops,⁷ and all ministers of the People of God, may the Lord keep you faithful and joyful in the service of the mission of the Church!

The choir and the assembly respond: AMEN! AMEN! AMEN!

And may Almighty God bless you, the Father (+), the Son (+) and the Holy Spirit (+)!

The choir and the assembly respond: AMEN! AMEN! AMEN!

⁷ "Bishop" can be omitted where the only bishop present is giving the Blessing.