



# SESSION 1

## INTRODUCTION TO SYNODALITY

### THEME

*Introduction to Synodality*

### PREPARATION

Before the first session of the Synodal Leadership Formation Course, please select a short scripture passage from anywhere in the Bible (no more than a few sentences) that relates to where you are on your spiritual journey. During the first session, you will have a few minutes to read the scripture passage and explain why the selection reflects something about you.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

*Participants will:*

- Learn about one another's interests and spirituality by listening openly to each scripture selection and personal story.
- Experience the movement of the Holy Spirit to guide our conversations in a group.
- Explore what synodality is and its surrounding misconceptions.
- Consider how to practice synodality in daily life.

## OUTLINE – 120 MINUTES

Welcome, Introductions, and Overview	15 Minutes
Scripture Presentations	25 Minutes
Debrief Scripture Presentations	10 Minutes
Presentation	25 Minutes
Breakout Groups Discussion	20 Minutes
Report Outs	10 Minutes
Conclusion and Closing Prayer	10 Minutes
Looking to the Next Session	5 Minutes

### WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, AND OVERVIEW

05 min



- Introductions
  - Each person introduces themselves, what organization they represent, and what they like to do on a day off work.
  - We will ask someone to go first, and then please invite the next person to share by name.
- Review the schedule for the session.

### SCRIPTURE PRESENTATIONS

25 min



The Lord speaks to us through the Word, silence, and experience.

In the breakout groups:

- Each person reads a selected scripture passage and offers a two-minute reflection about how it applies to their life.
- Listen without comment to the other members of the group as they offer their reflections.
- After every person has offered a reflection, take 30 seconds of silence to reflect on what you heard and what stood out from their reflections.
- After the 30 seconds of silence, each person shares a few words in response to the reflections of the other members.

### DEBRIEF SCRIPTURE PRESENTATIONS

10 min



Reflect upon the preceding process (the proclamation of Scripture, invoking the Holy Spirit through silent reflection in one another's presence, and listening to how the Holy Spirit is prompting us.) A few people will be invited to share a reflection on the question: How was that experience for you?



## SYNODAL PROCESS AND METHODS

*Review of the synodal process and methods that will be used in the six sessions:*

- Hospitality and welcome
- Extended listening and reflection
- Periods of silent reflection and communal discernment
- Checking biases and preconceptions
- Resources and journaling between sessions

As you listen, consider: How is God calling us to journey as a community focused on the mission to proclaim the Gospel of Christ more effectively?

## HOPES FOR THE EXPERIENCE

*Review the stated objectives of the Course.*

- Experience ways to lead by utilizing the principles of Encounter, Listening, Discernment, Participation, and Accountability
- Integrate principles of synodal leadership into their organizational leadership culture
- Experience this leadership formation and possibly replicate within their network

We will emphasize WHAT synodality is (the topic of dialogue and discernment) and HOW synodality is practiced (key elements of synodality).

## THE THREE PILLARS OF THE SYNODAL PROCESS

*The synodal process represents a way that we are Church:*

- Communion (Journeying Together)
- Participation (Co-Responsibility)
- Mission

The focus is to discern and identify ways the Holy Spirit is already at work among us, identify what may be lacking, who may not be at the table, and who we may need to hear from to go forward in faith.

As you listen, consider: How is God calling us to journey as a community focused on the mission to proclaim the Gospel of Christ more effectively?

## THEMES OF THE SESSIONS

Briefly explain the remaining themes the Course will touch on, as well as the objective for each theme.

- Active Listening: Understanding one another more fully through listening while withholding judgment
- Communal Discernment & Participatory Decision-Making: Experiencing the movement of the Holy Spirit to guide our conversations in a group
- Paths to Transformation: Becoming aware of our biases and assumptions for greater clarity in communication
- Adaptive Leadership: Reflecting on how leaders can address complex challenges and create new approaches
- Building Bridges Across Diverse Communities: Understanding the implications and the rich contribution of diversity and cultural differences

## BREAKOUT GROUPS DISCUSSION



In your breakout groups, please share in response to what you heard about the themes, objectives, and methods of synodality. Please consider what insight you want to report back to the large group after your breakout session.

As you hear about how we will interact with one another:

1. What excites you about what you heard?
2. What are some potential limitations or challenges about what you heard?
3. What might be challenging for you personally?

## REPORT OUTS



A representative of each breakout group will share a few salient points from their discussion.

## CONCLUSION AND CLOSING PRAYER

10 min



### *Concluding Question*

Reflecting on your session experience, what is your key takeaway from today?

### *Closing Prayer*

Does anyone have a prayer request, perhaps for someone you know who is struggling or someone who is celebrating a blessing?

## LOOKING TO THE NEXT SESSION

15 min



### Session Two: Active Listening

### REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT

Before the next session, read [Towards October 2024](#) (Synod document). Write some notes in answer to the two questions below and be prepared to share at the next session.



1. What are examples of co-responsibility, shared governance, and inclusive listening that you have observed in the Church?
2. What would you like to learn more about synodality?

Also - Please watch this short video:

[Levels of Listening - Otto Scharmer](#)



THE END OF  
SESSION 1