

SESSION 2

ACTIVE LISTENING FOR SYNODAL LEADERSHIP

THEME

Active Listening for Synodal Leadership

PREPARATION

At the end of the previous session, you were asked to read [Towards October 2024](#) (Synod document), write some notes in answer to the two questions below, and be prepared to share.



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

Also - Please watch this short video:

[Levels of Listening - Otto Scharmer](#)




LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Get to know one another more
- Reflect on how Jesus listened to people on the margins
- Examine how they listen to others
- Consider how listening is essential to synodal leadership
- Learn to use a tool for deep listening
- Commit to listening more effectively in pastoral ministry or any other aspect of life

OUTLINE – 120 MINUTES



Overview	5 Minutes
Revisit the Previous Session	15 Minutes
Scripture Reflection	20 Minutes
Presentation	20 Minutes
Large Group Silent Reflection	5 Minutes
Breakout Exercise of Deep Listening	30 Minutes
Report Outs	10 Minutes
Concluding Commitments	5 Minutes
Closing Prayer	5 Minutes
Looking to the Next Session	5 Minutes

SESSION 2 CONTENT

OVERVIEW



- Welcome
- Review the objectives and agenda for the session

REVISIT THE PREVIOUS SESSION



In the large group, the facilitator will call upon a few people to respond to the document “Towards October 2024” and the questions below:

- What have you seen working well in social relationships, organizational structures, processes of discernment, and decision-making to promote shared responsibility for the mission of the Church?
- Based on your reading of “Towards October 2024”, what might occur if the Church more fully adopts synodality?

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION



Listen to the passage with closed eyes. This may help you listen more intently and avoid distraction.

The Healing of the Blind Beggar: Luke 18: 35-43

Now as he approached Jericho a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging, and hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what was happening. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” He shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!” The people walking in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent, but he kept calling out all the more, “Son of David, have pity on me!” Then Jesus stopped and ordered that he be brought to him; and when he came near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He replied, “Lord, please let me see.” Jesus told him, “Have sight; your faith has saved you.” He immediately received his sight and followed him, giving glory to God. When they saw this, all the people gave praise to God.

LARGE GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS

03 min



- Why did Jesus need to ask, “*What do you want Me to do for you?*”
- How does the blind man represent people on the “side of the road” of society today?

BREAKOUT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

15 min



In your breakout group, answer all three questions. Each group member should be allowed time to answer at least one of the following questions.

- Who in your life do you wish you had listened to more, and why?
- How would you describe the difference between passive and active listening?
- Why might someone be afraid to listen deeply to others (below the surface of their words)?

PRESENTATION

20 min



SYNODALITY: REVOLUTION IN LISTENING

Pope Francis has called the Universal Church to an unprecedented process of listening to the People of God in the firm belief that God speaks through them.

HAVING REAL CONVERSATIONS

These are three ways Pope Francis calls the Church to be in deeper communion through synodality.

- *Listening, Not Lobbying:* Politics have invaded the Church. Synodality is not lobbying but listening and understanding people's situations. We are tempted to focus on what we will say in response instead of deeply listening to what the other person is saying. How can we hear the Spirit's call if we can't understand others in their situation? Practice listening; seek to understand.
- *Discerning, Not Voting:* Listen deeper and be attentive to what the Spirit might say through others. Listening and discerning must become the new normal if we are to be led by the Spirit in the Church. Consensus occurs when we can find a common interest or mission rather than holding to a personal opinion. In voting, there are “winners” and “losers.”
- *Praying, Not Politicking:* The Synod is a gathering in liturgy and prayer. It requires an openness to the movement of the Spirit when we are gathered in prayer. It utters the prayer of Samuel: “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” Synodality requires humility in place of defensiveness.

SETTING THE CONDITIONS FOR SMALL GROUP SHARING

What conditions can we create for meaningful spiritual sharing space?

- Set an informal atmosphere of respect
- If necessary, offer confidentiality (emotional safety)
- Be present and fully embody attention
- Create space for others (not interrupting, being welcoming, having a non-judgmental presence, allowing silence that calls others to speak)
- Speak with intention (provide clarity, don't ramble, speak from the heart, don't just list facts)
- Listen actively, not only to details but also to feelings

LEVELS OF LISTENING

The levels of listening in the table below generate a “field” of connection and communication.

The following table contains the four levels of listening from Otto Scharmer's work on *Theory U*¹ with an additional level of “contemplative listening” added for faith reflection by Discerning Leadership.

	Level of Listening	Listening Perspective	Awareness
1	DOWNLOADING	Listen From Habit	Reconfirming what we already know
2	FACTUAL <i>Open Mind</i>	Listen From Outside	Noticing disconfirming information
3	EMPATHETIC <i>Open Heart</i>	Listen From Within	Seeing through the eyes of another
4	CONTEMPLATIVE <i>Open Will</i>	Listen From Spirit	Discerning inner movements and invitations
5	GENERATIVE	Listen and Respond from the Whole	Holding space for something new to be born; seeing potential

1-The Essentials of Theory U: Core Principles and Applications Scharmer, Otto, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2018

LARGE GROUP SILENT REFLECTION

05 min



We will take three minutes of silent reflection to contemplate the questions:

- What is the narrative of my call to purpose, service, and responsibility?
- How do I currently find God present in my vocation?

BREAKOUT EXERCISE OF DEEP LISTENING

30 min



In smaller breakout groups, we will engage in the following exercise:

1. Choose one person from among the breakout group members to be the Timekeeper (give each person six minutes with a soft 1-minute signal).
2. Begin with about 30 seconds of silence and deep breathing.
3. Each person shares the story of their vocation — what prompted them to respond to their baptismal call to service.
4. After everyone has shared their story, each person takes one or two minutes to respond by saying something similar to: “As I heard others share, what resonated with me about what they said was... (words, images, emotions)...”
5. Close with about 30 seconds of silence and a Glory Be.

REPORT OUTS

10 min



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

1. What did you notice and appreciate about the breakout group conversation?
2. What about the conditions set for the breakout group stood out to you?
3. What value is there in reconnecting with your vocational story?

CONCLUDING COMMITMENTS

05 min



Today, we considered how Jesus listened to the blind man. Consider how you can listen more actively in the forthcoming weeks. What is one situation where you can practice listening to others more profoundly or actively between now and the next session?

CLOSING PRAYER

05 min



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

LOOKING TO THE NEXT SESSION

05 min



Session Three: Communal Discernment & Participatory
Decision Making

Read the following homily by Pope Francis:

[Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis](#) - Encounter, Listen, Discern



Practice using what you learned today between now and the next session.

- Be aware of your listening experience in various aspects of your life. Consider when you are listening at one of the five levels we discussed today (downloading, factual, empathetic, contemplative, and generative).
- Make a note of any generative listening you experienced.
- Write down some of your experiences to share in the next session.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Otto Scharmer](#) A website with additional resources on *Theory U* and author and researcher Otto Scharmer



[Synodality – Revolution in Listening](#)



THE END OF
SESSION 2