



National Synthesis of the People of God in the United States of America for the Interim Stage of the 2021-2024 Synod

Dear People of God in the United States,

With deep gratitude, I have the distinct honor of sharing the *National Synthesis of the People of God in the United States of America for the Interim Stage*. This relatively brief document marks the completion of the Interim Stage of the 2021-2024 Synod: *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*. This synthesis, and the work that preceded it, also signals an important movement forward in the integration of a synodal pastoral style in Catholic communities across the United States.

A little less than five months ago we invited the dioceses and eparchies to engage in further listening, specifically surrounding the fruits of the October 2023 assembly. Despite the short time and limited resources, diocesan leaders and bishops continued to accompany participants with creativity and agility in an authentic engagement in the synodal process.

Seventy-six percent of dioceses and eparchies in the United States submitted a report to the US Synod Team. Their reports are the product of over 1,000 listening sessions and the contributions of over 35,000 participants. Although we did not solicit reports from organizations, over 15 listening sessions were organized through working groups based on three priority areas: *participation in Church life*, *social justice*, and *vocations*. Over 350 people participated in these listening sessions with particular sessions devoted to Catholic education (including higher education and campus ministry), women, lay movements, clergy, consecrated life, theologians, healthcare, migration, poverty, and one session was organized to afford bishops an opportunity to listen and speak with one another.

While no document could cover the full range of topics on the hearts and minds of Catholics who participated in shared listening and speaking during this Interim Stage, this synthesis offers an articulation of what can be seen as a moment of further maturation for the synodal journey in the United States.

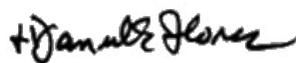
This document reflects the sense that there exists among Catholics in the United States a deep desire to rebuild and strengthen our communion as the Body of Christ. Rebuilding trust where it is frayed involves practicing the humanly graceful art of listening to each other and speaking together. The more we do this, the more we realize that it is the Lord who never fails us. He responds to us, and knows well how to accomplish his will through the communion of his imperfect and often wounded servants.

Along the synodal path the Spirit opens up spaces where we can speak about longstanding tensions while at the same time deepening the bonds of our baptismal communion. We might ask “how can this be?” And the Lord responds: “Behold, I am with you.”

This document invites study and reflection, not in isolation, but in conjunction with the lived experience and documents that have gone before it throughout the synodal process. The journey has been long, but by God’s design so is the life of the Church. Our journey is a significant moment within the life of the Church. I pray that we are sustained by the work of the Holy Spirit in the ecclesial renewal initiated by the 2021-2024 Synod.

Thanks to each of you for your commitment, for your willingness to listen and speak from within the Communion that is ours by grace, and for your companionship along the Way.

Yours in Christ,



Bishop Daniel E. Flores
Diocese of Brownsville
Chair, Committee on Doctrine

Introduction

During the Interim Stage between the two sessions of the 2021-2024 Synod, the Church in the United States approached the listening sessions in a new way. Given the short timeline, dioceses were encouraged to hold two-to-three listening sessions during Lent and submit a three-to-five-page document to the U.S. Synod Team (see Appendix B). Additionally, the U.S. Synod Team created three Working Groups around participation in Church life, social justice, and vocations (see Appendix C). These Working Groups brought together bishops, USCCB staff, diocesan synod leaders, theologians, experts, and ministers. Overall, seventy-six percent of U.S. dioceses and eparchies submitted syntheses to the U.S. Synod Team. The diocesan reports went through a regional process as happened in the Diocesan Stage. The fifteen regions and the three Working Groups submitted reports to the US Synod Team; these reports serve as the source material for this synthesis.



LISTENING SESSIONS
SYNTHESIS DOCUMENTS
WORKING GROUPS

The Listening Sessions

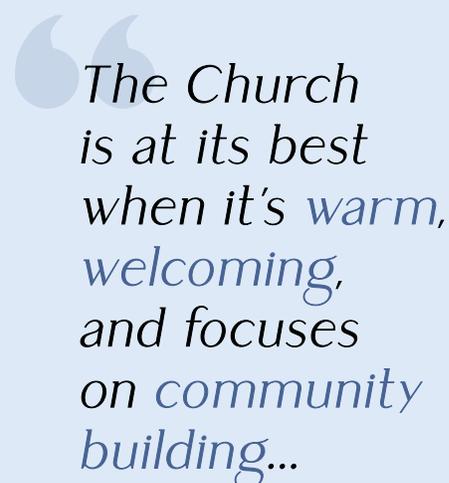
After two-and-a-half years of synodal dialogue and discernment, the ongoing reflection has deepened in the ecclesiological vision of the Second Vatican Council. This moment of maturation has exposed, or brought further into the light, underlying tensions. In the discernment of the fruits of the syntheses two basic hopes for the Church began to emerge: the *Safe Harbor* of certainty and openness and the prophetic mystery at the heart of our *Fiery Communion*.

SAFE HARBOR AND FIERY COMMUNION

The Church, at its best, can be seen as a Safe Harbor, where the faithful are embraced, sustained, and loved: *“People come when they are broken. It is so nice to see people reaching out to help each other. At my parish, I feel I have a family there”* (Region I). Similar to the refuge provided to the injured man by the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), participants understood the Church as a Safe Harbor that provides a place to heal while on the journey of missionary discipleship. *“The Church is at its best when it’s warm, welcoming, and focuses on community building and doing more for other people”* (Region XII).

Several examples of how the parish best provided a Safe Harbor were mentioned in many of the listening sessions. Parishes with numerous small faith communities, bible studies, and prayer groups prove most successful in welcoming and integrating people from diverse backgrounds. These structures facilitate relationship-building and, thus, practice hospitality that goes beyond superficial welcoming. *“Our participants talked about their need for a community of compassion and openness. Our Church is the place for the most authentic community, where we are in communion with our Lord and our neighbors. Our people shared their longing for that ‘authentic community’”* (Region II). Acknowledging that the face of the Church in the United States is composed of countless cultural and ethnic groups that enrich it, the faithful expressed the desire to *“promote interculturality so that there is more unity between cultures that share the same church”* (Region VI). The role of Catholic schools in evangelizing the community was also widely recognized: *“Participants across many of the (arch)dioceses saw Catholic schools as a vital part of the mission of the Church and as a means of evangelization”* (Region V).

At the same time, the Church is called not only to be a place of safety, but also a Fiery Communion that witnesses to the Gospel with prophetic zeal. Participants in synodal listening sessions acknowledged that the synodal process has unearthed tensions within our communion, in which some *“were challenged by the Church’s ‘indecisiveness,’ by ‘lack of reverence,’ and by the perception that the Church is ‘changing the traditional methods’ and accepting current ‘things against our church rules’”* (Region III). Similarly, *“some are very worried about how the Church responds to LGBTQ and other marginalized people... others want to stand firm in the Church’s teaching and not shy away from the truth”* (Region VIII). It was expressed by many participants that *“leadership in the Church needs to be clear about our truth; confusion is leading to frustration and division among the faithful”* (Region VII).



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and focuses
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building...*

Region XII Synthesis

While this Fiery Communion can sound discordant, the ardent nature of our diverse communion in Christ is not outside of the tradition. These tensions call for a prophetic response, sustained by the Safe Harbor and embracing the Fiery Communion. *“If we don’t talk about difficult topics, we can become like a dysfunctional family”* (Region VII). As the People of God recognize this synodal moment, the Safe Harbor provided by and in the Church allows us prophetically to embrace the tensions of the Fiery Communion. *“Listening to others will have its challenges. We will find disagreements, we will find the need for greater discussion, we will find a troubling in our souls, we will at times be presented with such hopeful possibilities. But we cannot know these things if we are not present to each other”* (Region XIII).

THE IMPORTANCE OF EVANGELIZATION

Many of the reports from the listening sessions expressed the wish for an *“increased focus on formation for evangelization,”* noting that this need *“is critical”* (Region IX). Many of *“[t]he faithful, including marginalized groups who participated in the synod, communicated a desire to participate in the Church’s mission of evangelization”* (Region XII). To meet this desire, several reports *“reflected a need for stronger catechesis and formation, focusing specifically on programs for evangelization, Catholic social teaching, and the role of the family”* (Region V). As noted in one regional report, *“the Church succeeds in its mission when it provides clarity of its mission to its members and forms members at all levels in their mission. In doing this the Church can better meet people where they are in their spiritual journey during evangelization and be properly equipped to draw people into the Church through active and outgoing evangelization”* (Region XI).

DESIRE FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE CHURCH’S MISSION

Participants in synodal listening sessions also recognized that amidst these tensions there was also opportunity, especially around a greater focus on co-responsibility in the pursuit of the mission of the Church. *“It is important for Church leaders to recognize the maturity of the baptized. If the laity are to be truly co-responsible, they must be appreciated for the gifts they bring and not be relegated to the little brother or sister. Baptismal dignity is the starting point for everyone”* (Social Justice Working Group). This invitation to co-responsibility, however, must go both ways: *“It is important for lay people to rely on their pastors and help their pastors, and it is important for pastors to rely on their lay people”* (Region II).

Participants expressed their gratitude for being blessed *“with good and faithful priests”* (Region IV). Yet, continued concerns about clericalism, and related temptations to power and entitlement in the wider Church were voiced: *“[Clericalism] is impeding the Holy Spirit and impacts the people of God”* (Region I). A priest participant shared: *“Division in the presbyterate is unfortunate. We need to be better at getting past the bitterness and different theologies and political preferences. We need to have charity in the priesthood. Division in the priesthood will bring division in the Church”* (Vocations Working Group). Participants were thankful for the witness of those who serve as priests, religious, and consecrated men and women as well as those who are discerning their vocations, but they are also concerned about *“the lack of vocations and the need for vocation awareness, encouragement to discern vocations and formation of discernment communities”* (Region X).

Many participants voiced tensions around the active participation of women in the work of proclaiming the Good News of Christ. *“Men and women across the conversation sessions felt that the Church must do more to recognize and celebrate the contributions of women. [...] There needs to be more opportunities for*

women to hold leadership roles within parishes, dioceses, schools, and organizations” (Participation Working Group). Similar sentiments were uncovered around the desire of young adults to participate actively in their faith: “As a young person I want to have opportunities to express my understanding of the faith and not be boxed into expressions of faith that are not relevant to my life experience. Young people want to find new expressions and to be accepted when we do” (Region I). Overall, participants saw these pressure points as opportunities to “engage the laity to take identity in their baptism and go out and proclaim the Good News” (Region XII).

EXISTENTIAL OBEDIENCE

Some participants regarded this moment as an invitation to deepen our trust in God who can work through the imperfect members of the Body of Christ. The ongoing synodal experience has offered the People of God a reminder of our call to existential obedience: “[T]he importance of rooting ourselves in the person of Christ, keeping our eyes on His face as we thirst for authentic unity. This includes respect for different roles that they may enrich, rather than disparage or discard” (Vocations Working Group). While heartfelt disagreement may arise, our communion of shared faith in Christ calls us to walk together, actively participating in the Church’s mission.

ENTERING MORE DEEPLY INTO REALITY

While the tensions within the Fiery Communion can sometimes be palpable and challenging, participants expressed an earnest and urgent desire to address those concerns that most keenly impacted our communion as the People of God. Too frequently, these tensions expressed themselves as “confusion” among the participants.

“There was an overwhelming consensus on the need for our Church to provide clarity in its messaging to the People of God and to foster opportunities that promote clear channels of communication” (Region XI). Numerous reports from the listening sessions cited instances of communication, both from the hierarchy and from secular and Catholic media, which reflect and perpetuate division within the universal church and send conflicting messages of what it means to be Catholic. When the communication of the Church is not clear and consistent, it becomes an obstacle to the mission. “The Catholic Church always finds itself being in a reactive position instead of a proactive position as far as discussions, communications, and explanations [of] things” (Region XV).

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Region XI Synthesis

This tension arose in more than one area of Church teaching and tradition. One area that participants concretely experienced stress was in situations relating to the liturgy. “What emerged in several reports is that in addition to the discussion about liturgical preferences, the celebration of the Latin Mass seems to be ‘a focal point of broader debates about tradition, modernity, and the best ways to nurture faith across the diverse spectrum of Catholic belief and practice’” (Region VIII).

Another area where division was keenly experienced was around Catholic Social Teaching. The *“conversations ‘on social justice and inclusion were filled with moments of profound pain and generational hurt,’ and there was consequently a widely expressed desire for a ‘greater emphasis on formation in Catholic Social Teaching that affirms the dignity of all lives as being made in God’s image and likeness”* (Region IV). Participants expressed concerns that the Church has allowed the ongoing polarization and conflict to lead to a denial of the Church’s social magisterium in many situations. *“Many times, we evangelize according to what we think, and we think we can modify the Gospel according to our needs”* (Region XIV). The desire for unity, and to overcome our disunity by entering more deeply into our reality as the People of God, was repeatedly expressed by participants.

A third area of disagreement that arose in many of the listening sessions was the tension between a welcoming spirit and the need to articulate Church teaching. There is a longing to include those who thirst for God but who have also experienced systematic rejection: *“[M]any voiced that they know people who struggle with being accepted by the church because of gender (especially LGBTQ+) and marital status (divorced, or marriage outside of the church). Many people feel hurt by the Church and are not willing to come back”* (Region III). In a particular way, participants recognized that many people *“seek a space of authentic belonging in the Church, and in God’s eyes everyone is welcome”* (Region IX). It was noted that the Church becomes *“a powerful force of engagement when we nurture, welcome and activate the faithful, even with its challenges,”* fostering the inclusion of many, including the poor (Region VI). Also *“there has been a lack of focus on the needs of those with disabilities, the handicapped...There is a need to reach out to families with disabled members”* (Region XIV).

The theme of adaptability and innovation in how the Church evangelizes, welcomes, and reaches out to people came up frequently in the discussions. *“Restoring or introducing new forms of ministry and organs of participation should be implemented where pastoral circumstances of the modern Church locally demand it”* (Region XV). Participants were grateful for those Church institutions whose nimbleness has allowed them to witness to Christ and become prophetic, giving a voice to those whose voice is not heard. Such nimbleness will allow these institutions and structures to remain mission-oriented, supporting them *“to operate more from a ministerial perspective rather than the operation as a business”* (Region X).

A related area of tension that came up frequently in the listening sessions revolved around how many parts of the Church – some of her long-established institutions – have become complacent, even ossified. In these instances, the Church needs *“the courage to go out beyond methods and even structures that are ‘frozen.’ As [one diocesan report] puts it: ‘some are afraid of change and tired of doing new things, they are content with doing things the way it has always been done before”* (Region XI). When institutions and structures fall victim to complacency to the point of rigidity, they open the way for grave institutional sins such as sexual abuse and racism.

Though the Church continues to work on eradicating such sins, they have left wounds in our history that continue to inflict pain today. One of these enduring wounds is the sex abuse crisis, which *“has thrown up walls to building relationships and hurts the reputation of the Church.’ The trauma and scandal have had a generational impact. ‘The youth and young adults of the Church believe they deserve some sort of apology or remedy for abuses that happened not to them, but to their parents, grandparents, or further generations. This distrust and desire for apologies keeps them from participating in the Church”* (Region

XII). Another enduring wound stems from “[t]he sin of racism and the sin of enslaving Black people for the betterment of the Church” (Region IV).

ENCOUNTER AND REFLECTION IS FORMATION

Participants in the synodal listening sessions expressed a desire to grow in unity and to utilize this moment of the synodal process. *“Our Church does an exceptional job reaching the world. The missionary spirit of our Church is like no other. We are reaching out and touching people experiencing poverty, loneliness, and we should celebrate that”* (Social Justice Working Group). This call to move beyond the tensions is a call to form ourselves deeply in the work of encounter and reflection to which the synodal process is inviting us. *“So often we hear people, but we do not listen to their words, their sufferings, or how to best love them. We can miss out on being Christ to them”* (Region I). This is the formation necessary to respond to these tensions within our Fiery Communion and deepen the synodal nature of our Safe Harbor. *“How we learn synodality will best take place from engaging people in the synodal method”* (Region IX). There is a clear desire for formation for all the faithful: *“One of the most discussed sentiments across our region is the need for better formation of every type, for both pastoral leadership and laity. Formation is key to growth in a parish, and is important to improving how we practice accompaniment, co-responsibility, and a genuine spirit of welcoming”* (Region XIII).

Synodality, participants noted, must be a central focus of the formation in co-responsibility as we move forward: *“An increased desire for clear, tangible, meaningful, and consistent communication: from dioceses to local parishes, from priests to parishioners, within congregations, and principally from Rome to the faithful, manifested in a wonderful way in the faithful’s appreciation for the synodal dialogues in which they participated”* (Region V).

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Social Justice Working Group



Bishops' Listening Session

Bishops who participated in the synodal conversations sponsored by the USCCB were asked to discuss together the strengths and stresses of their varied relationships as bishops shepherding their people, and as bishops in relation to other bishops, and in relation to the Successor of Peter.

Bishops at the listening session shared the positive experiences of synodal listening in their dioceses. Notably, several commented on the challenges posed by the changing cultures within their presbyterates. Priests from other countries need to be appreciated for their gifts, and bishops should try to visit their dioceses of origin. Ecclesiological stances vary among the priests. This can be a source of division among the priests themselves. Sometimes a bishop feels he must act “*as the episcopal referee*” among the priests. The image of the referee is an important one, related to that of a mediator, and highlights how bishops are relational figures in the life of the local Church. Fostering fraternal relations and unity with the priests and among them was often mentioned as a high, but challenging, priority.

Various kinds of polarization were mentioned that affect the fabric of dioceses and of the Church in the United States as a whole. As one bishop expressed it, “[*P*]olarization within our culture is the greatest threat.” Some of these polarizations are political in origin, others more explicitly theological in nature. It was affirmed that integration of a synodal style of conversation, especially in the parishes and dioceses, in search of better human relations and mutual understanding can help diffuse resentment and suspicion. This will require patience and perseverance. As one bishop pointed out, “*The Synod fosters communion and creates space for relationship... It is important to come with humility.*” Another noted, “*The Church can be an oasis from polarization.*”

The conversations among the bishops yielded an appreciation for fraternal relations between bishops of the same ecclesiastical province and episcopal region. These gatherings, including spiritual retreats, are seen as valuable and a source of strength in fostering a sense of lived communion and fraternal support, especially in challenging times. “*Having the basis of region/province helped in discussing issues and how to roll them out; we don't feel alone.*”

Appreciation was voiced for recent changes in how the USCCB bi-annual meeting agendas have opened more spaces of time for fraternal dialogues in small groups to discuss common concerns. These face-to-face encounters in small groups foster better mutual understanding and a kind of non-defensiveness: “*[W]e are spiritual brothers and not just ecclesial figures.*”

Of particular importance was the appreciation expressed by the Ukrainian Catholic bishops of the United States. They emphasized positive relationships with dioceses, bishops, and the USCCB. “*Sometimes the Latin Church in other parts of the world are not so accepting and supportive.*” Also, it was observed that bishops in the United States need to look for



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ways to strengthen relations with bishops in Canada and Mexico. *“Fraternal and institutional ties are not robust.”*

Bishops gave a generally positive assessment of relations between themselves and the Holy See. Several noted, however, that direct contact with Rome is not very frequent, but did express appreciation for the work of the Apostolic Nuncio in fostering a spirit of communion, and in facilitating communication with the Holy See. The bishops did express some frustration that communication between bishops and the offices of the Holy See could be better, offering the example that in the past they were given advance notice of a document that would later be published by one or other of the dicasteries. This seems not to be done as much as it used to be. Despite this frustration, the experience of the Ad Limina visits to Rome were described as occasions of fraternity and joy. The conversations with Pope Francis are fraternal and encouraging, and the *“Ad Limina receptivity of the dicasteries”* is much appreciated.

Overall, there was great gratitude for the experience of gathering synodally as bishops. These moments allowed for a deeper reflection of how synodality can best be integrated into Church life in the United States.



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Conclusion

Gratitude for this synodal journey is profound. Much has been done to move along the synodal path as companions in the U.S. Church. Mindful of Pope Francis' notion of a culture of encounter, tensions remain that will require continued reflection and dialogue. These tensions need not disrupt the communion of charity in the Church. *“There is a humility that must be embraced for the genuine and honest synodal temperament to take deeper root”* (Region XIII). The desire and fortitude of the People of God to engage in the work of synodality is evident in the reports from the listening sessions. There is a *“growing expectation about concrete actions in the transformation, renewal, and evolution of pastoral and ministerial outreach in the parish and in dioceses (because of the implementation of a synodal mindset)”* (Region X). Yet there is a long way to go.

In the United States, the Interim Stage of the Synod has offered the People of God the continued experience of ongoing formation in the ecclesiological vision and missionary outreach of the Second Vatican Council. This stage has been marked by curiosity, creativity, signs of maturation, and an uncovering of tensions that reveal a desire to enter more deeply into the sources of our hope and trust. Participants repeatedly expressed gratitude for the chance to share their experiences and listen to one another. A major theme expressed by many during this time was the deepening awareness of how our trust in God expresses itself in relation to our imperfect institutions within the Church. Although this is difficult, it was noted by many that the faithful *“should not be embarrassed about recognizing that our Church might be a little messy - it's better not to pretend that we are the perfect institution, but that we belong to the perfect and one, true faith”* (Region VI). Although people recognized that the Church is complex, they also recognized through the synodal experiences, that the gifts given to the Church are more than enough to tend to any messiness. *“(There is power in the) inclusivity of love – [we] can't have too much, and hopefully there's no one we can't love”* (Region XIV).

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Appendix A – The U.S. Synod Team

U.S. Synod Team

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Richard Coll, USCCB

Bishop Daniel Flores, Diocese of Brownsville

Fr. Michael Fuller, USCCB

Julia McStravog, USCCB

U.S. Bishops Team

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Bishop Daniel Flores, Diocese of Brownsville

Bishop Joseph Tyson, Diocese of Yakima

Bishop David Walkowiak, Diocese of Grand Rapids

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U.S. Synod Team Working Groups

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DeKarlos Blackmon, Diocese of Austin

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Bishop Daniel Flores, Diocese of Brownsville

Paul Jarzembowski, USCCB

Fran Lavelle, Diocese of Jackson

Lois Locey, Diocese of St. Petersburg

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Mary Gore, Archdiocese of Anchorage-Juneau

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Lucas Swanepoel, Catholic Health Association of the United States

Bishop Joseph Tyson, Diocese of Yakima

Archbishop Thomas Zinkula, Archdiocese of Dubuque

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Vocations

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Alessandro Rovati, Diocese of Charlotte

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Appendix B – Interim Stage Guidelines



Appendix B Interim Stage Guidelines *Towards October 2024*

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Where have I seen or experienced successes—and distresses—within the Church’s structure(s)/organization/leadership/life that encourage or hinder the mission?
- How can the structures and organization of the Church help all the baptized to respond to the call to proclaim the Gospel and to live as a community of love and mercy in Christ?

DEEPENING

Hold 2-3 listening sessions during Lent 2024 regarding the guiding questions.

BROADENING

The Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops has produced a [worksheet](#) to assist with receiving the fruits of the October assembly and to continue on a path of conversion in the local churches.

SCRIPTURE

Prayer and reflection with the word of God is essential on the synodal path. The US Synod Team recommends using the following scripture for deepening reflection upon synodality:

- [John 14](#)
- [Romans 12](#)
- [Isaiah 61](#)

HOLDING LISTENING SESSIONS

The USCCB offers these suggestions to meet the proposed schedule from the Synod of Bishops.

- Hold 2-3 diocesan-wide listening sessions regarding the guiding questions.
 - Include voices that may not have been heard in earlier stages of the Synod, or other groups that were underrepresented in your diocesan consultations.
 - Collaborate with Catholic-affiliated groups and organizations in your diocese, including schools, colleges, non-profits, and healthcare facilities.
 - Focus upon the voices of the People of God and use quotations in the synthesis.
- Use the [Conversation in the Spirit](#) method.

SYNTHESIS

- Prepared collaboratively by a small team. For continuity, the team may be comprised of members of the Diocesan Synod Team or those who worked on the Diocesan Synthesis for the Diocesan Stage of the Synod.
- **No longer than 3-5 pages.**
 - Focus upon the voices of the People of God and use quotations in the synthesis.
 - An optional two-page testimony of best practices for synodality used in your diocese is welcome. These will be collected by the US Synod Team and sent directly to the Vatican.
- **Due Monday, April 8, 2024**

TIMELINE

January 2024	Prayer and spiritual preparation of the People of God
Lent 2024	Hold 2-3 diocesan wide listening sessions regarding the guiding question
April 8, 2024	3-5 page synthesis of diocesan listening sessions due to USCCB
April 9-22	Regional synthesis process

April 23-May 14 Drafting National Synthesis

May 15, 2024 US Synthesis due to Synod Secretariat

RESOURCES

- [*A Synodal Church in Mission*](#)
- Interim Stage [Worksheet](#)
- [Letter of the Synod to the People of God](#)
- [Instrumentum Laboris](#) for XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops
- North American [Final Document](#)
- [Document for the Continental Stage](#)
- [US National Synthesis](#)
- [Preparatory Document](#)
- [Vademecum](#)

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Appendix C – Working Group Guidelines



Appendix C Interim Stage Guidelines – Working Groups *Towards October 2024*

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Where have I seen or experienced successes—and distresses—within the Church’s structure(s)/organization/leadership/life that encourage or hinder the mission?
- How can the structures and organization of the Church help all the baptized to respond to the call to proclaim the Gospel and to live as a community of love and mercy in Christ?

DEEPENING

Hold 2-3 listening sessions during Lent 2024 regarding the guiding questions with the People of God in your priority area.

BROADENING

The Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops has produced a [worksheet](#) to assist with receiving the fruits of the October assembly and to continue on a path of conversion in the local churches.

SCRIPTURE

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- [John 14](#)
- [Romans 12](#)
- [Isaiah 61](#)

WORKING GROUPS

The US Synod Team has identified three priority areas:

- Participation
 - Lay Associations & Ecclesial Movements
 - Schools, Colleges, and Universities
 - Women
 - Young People
- Social Justice
 - Healthcare
 - Migration
 - Poverty
- Vocations
 - Bishops
 - Contemplatives, Consecrated Men and Women, Religious, Priests, Deacons, & Seminarians
 - Theologians

PREPARATION

Work Groups will meet in advance of the listening sessions in order to:

- Identify organizations/groups that may be open to collaboration
- Schedule listening sessions and assign roles and responsibilities
- Extend invitations to participants
- Reflect and pray together upon the recommended scripture
- Practice Conversation in the Spirit

HOLDING LISTENING SESSIONS

The US Synod offers these suggestions to meet the proposed schedule from the Synod of Bishops.

- Hold 2-3 nation-wide listening sessions regarding the guiding questions and priority area of your working group.
 - Include voices that may not have been heard in earlier stages of the Synod, or other groups that were underrepresented in earlier consultations.

- Collaborate with Catholic-affiliated groups and organizations relevant to your priority area.
- Focus upon the voices of the People of God and use quotations in the synthesis.
- Use the [Conversation in the Spirit](#) method

SYNTHESIS

- Prepared by the Working Group
- **No longer than 3-5 pages**
 - Focus upon the voices of the People of God and use quotations in the synthesis
- **Due Monday, April 8, 2024**

TIMELINE

January 2024	Prayer and spiritual preparation of the Working Groups
Lent 2024	Hold 2-3 nation-wide listening sessions regarding the guiding question
April 8, 2024	3-5 page synthesis of priority area listening sessions due to US Synod Team
April 9-22	Regional synthesis process
April 23-May 14	Drafting National Synthesis
May 15, 2024	US Synthesis due to Synod Secretariat

RESOURCES

- [A Synodal Church in Mission](#)
- Interim Stage [Worksheet](#)
- [Letter of the Synod to the People of God](#)
- [Instrumentum Laboris](#) for XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops
- North American [Final Document](#)
- [Document for the Continental Stage](#)

- [US National Synthesis](#)
- [Preparatory Document](#)
- [Vademecum](#)

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