



Synod
2021
2023

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

*Our ongoing journey
towards a listening Church
through the Holy Spirit.*

EN.ARCHOC.CA/SYNOD-2021-2023





Contents

Page 3 A Winter Morning Reflection, by Maureen Cerroni
Page 4 The Purpose of This Synod, A Way of Being Church
Page 5-6 Learning Again the Synodal Way, by Prof. Catherine Clifford
Page 7 The Fundamental Questions of This Synod
Page 8-9 Shepherds and Magi and Us, by Fr. Tim Coonen OMI
Page 10 Synod Timeline
Page 11 What Does All This Mean for Me, by Dorothy Wood
Page 11 Links to Learn More!
Page 12 Synodal Prayer

Pope Francis initiated a synodal journey of the whole People of God, beginning in October 2021 in each local Church and culminating in October 2023 in the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, the goal of this first phase is to offer to as many as possible:

- ◆ a true synodal experience,
- ◆ an opportunity for mutual listening with the Holy Spirit,
- ◆ an experience of walking forward together.

"It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium."

—POPE FRANCIS

Source: Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall

A Winter Morning Reflection

By Maureen Cerroni



As I sit down to reflect on the synod process, my eyes look over the frame of the tree outside my condo window. With her branches bare in the cold winter chill, you wouldn't know that a black blight had curled and shrivelled her leaves during the warmer season. She stands tall, smack on the side of Bronson Avenue, bathed in the fumes of a constant stream of motors. As the ground shakes with the roar of larger trucks, I ask her: If you could walk away, wouldn't you turn the next corner on Kippewa and head to greener space in Commissioner's Park beside Dow's Lake? What a better life you would have, further away from pollution, in softer earth, by running waters..... And she responds, knowingly—Wouldn't you miss me?

We are hearing a lot of talk about synod these days. About journeying together and listening to one another with respect and openness. My tree friend knows all about listening—she knows how to stay still and pay attention no matter how the wind howls. She can relate to things not being just the way she may like or need. She bears witness to the ills of her surroundings in the marks and deformities of her body. But her core is strong, and she still pushes out green leaves at the first warmth of springtime. A new chance to start again: she will not be deterred.

Pope Francis is calling us all to a new beginning. Spring will come again and let us get ready now to bring forth new growth in the Spirit. Let us embrace this synodal process as best we can.

Photo by: Mario Cerroni Photographs

The Purpose of This Synod:

A Synod on Synodality, as a Way of Being Church

With the convocation of this synod, Pope Francis is inspiring a process of listening to one another and to the Holy Spirit in the local parishes in order to discern the path we are called to walk together as Church. In other words, this synod is really about being synodal in order to learn how to become more synodal.

The theme of this synod is about the very nature of the Church, the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* [way of living and operating] as Church.

It is an opportunity to discern together how we move along the path toward a more synodal Church, as a way of being for how the Church lives her mission in the world.

The process of listening, learning, and discerning together helps to foster communion, renewal, and a missionary heart within the Church.

“Our walk together in following Christ is what most resembles and manifests the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God.” (Synod Preparatory Document)

The Church already has many ways in which she lives this idea of synodality, such as youth groups, bible study groups, CWL, Knights of Columbus, parish council, and outreach to the poor and marginalized.

A SYNOD FOR ALL

While all the baptized are specifically called to take part in the Synodal Process, no one – no matter their religious affiliation – should be excluded from sharing their perspective and experiences, insofar as they want to help the Church on her synodal journey of seeking what is good and true. This is especially true of those who are most vulnerable or marginalized.

(Vademecum, 2.1)

Source: Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall



Image: [publicdomainvectors.org](https://www.publicdomainvectors.org)

Learning Again the Synodal Way

By Prof. Catherine Clifford

In the earliest account of the nascent church, the author of the Acts of the Apostles refers to the community as a *koinonia*, a communion bonded together by the love of God and by love for one another, sharing their goods and gifts so that none were in need (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-36). The root of the word “church” is found in these early writings, which call the early community *ekklesia* – literally, the assembly, the gathered people of God. They know themselves to be a community of disciples, apprentices, on a continual journey as they strive to follow Jesus, to understand and live by his teaching. They are called “followers of the Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9-23; 22:4; 24:14-22),

followers of Jesus who is “the Way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

Each time early Christians confronted new challenges, they sought to discern a way forward *together*. Two prime examples of this practice appear in chapters 6 and 15 of Acts. In the first case, the community discerns the need for a new ministry to care for widows and the poor; in the second, the church faces the question of inculturation: Can one be saved without embracing the customs of Jewish ritual purity? In each case, the Twelve sought the counsel of those who were wise and filled with the Holy Spirit. In the



The Second Vatican Council opened in Rome on October 11, 1962.

Photo: flickr/manhhai

process, they included the “whole community” (Acts 6:2, 5) and sought “the consent of the whole church” (Acts 15:22) as they prayed, spoke, listened, and discerned the best path forward.

Throughout the history of Christianity, church leaders have met regularly in “synods,” assemblies that are meant to continue this effort of Spirit-guided discernment and decision making. The word “synod” echoes our understanding of the very nature of the church (from the Greek *syn* – together – and *hodos* – the way). It refers to the manner in which we walk together along the way as the pilgrim people of God. In Latin languages, these meetings were called “councils.” Beginning in the fourth century, in the age of Christendom, these gatherings were increasingly clerical affairs. A few lay advisors and theologians would attend, though the interests of the people were generally represented by emperors, kings, and their delegates. The Second Vatican Council (1962–65) began to reverse the dynamics of

monarchal and clericalized patterns of church governance when it recognized the dignity of all the baptized and recovered a more biblical understanding of the church as the people of God. It called for new structures to promote a more “collegial” style of church governance, including the international synod and national conference of bishops. It also encouraged the establishment of diocesan and parish pastoral councils and the regular meeting of diocesan synods – though these have yet to be implemented in a consequential way.

By exhorting the bishops to embark upon a synodal process with the whole community of the baptized and to listen to the voices of the marginalized, Pope Francis is inviting the whole church to relearn some ancient yet forgotten habits. His aim is not, as he has said, to create a new church, but to help us learn new ways of being church, ways that better reflect the nature of who we are as a community of disciples on a shared journey of faith.

The purpose of the Synod is to plant dreams,
draw forth prophecies and visions,
allow hope to flourish, inspire trust,
bind up wounds, weave together relationships,
awaken a dawn of hope,
learn from one another,
and create a bright resourcefulness
that will enlighten minds,
warm hearts,
give strength to our hands,
and inspire a vision of the future
filled with the joy of the Gospel.



Photo: Heather Duggan

—POPE FRANCIS

The Fundamental Questions of This Synod

This synod is on synodality itself, which means “journeying together.” The Pope would like to hear from the People of God on what the Holy Spirit is saying to our Church today and how we can become a more synodal, listening Church.

The fundamental questions are as follows:

How are we doing Church?

- A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.” How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local church?
- What experiences of your local church does this question remind you of?
- What joys did they bring?
- What difficulties and obstacles did they encounter? What wounds did they reveal?
- What insights did they give rise to?

How can we do Church better?

- What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?
- Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit come through?
- What is the Spirit asking of us?
- What needs to be confirmed, what changes need to be considered, what steps need to be taken?
- Where do we see a consensus being reached?
- What paths are opening up for our local church?



Text source: Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall / Photo by: flickr/ © Mazur/catholicnews.org.uk

Shepherds and Magi and Us

By Tim Coonen, O.M.I., Pastor

We are just a few weeks beyond the stories of Christmas and all those familiar events surrounding the birth of Jesus. Among the characters in the story, we see two very different groups journeying to the same destination: the shepherds and the magi (and maybe three, if we include the angels, but God only knows how they travel!). The shepherds were local Jewish folk, living in the fields with the sheep: poor, uneducated, unsophisticated. The magi couldn't have been more different: foreign, Gentile folk, wealthy, highly educated, dignified, and certainly travelling in a caravan with their servants.

The shepherds and the magi were at opposite ends of the spectrum in so many ways: different religions, different social status, different worldviews, different levels of wealth, different nationalities. Yet, they are seen in the Gospel as having more in common than not. They journeyed separately yet together to discover the Saviour of the World!

Both the shepherds and the magi followed “divine promptings” as they travelled to discover Jesus. The shepherds followed angelic

voices; the magi followed a star. Each group found the Saviour through journeying together in response to divine guidance, surely to their surprise!

“Synod” is a word we are beginning to hear often in the Church these days, because Pope Francis has called the worldwide Church into a special synod. The word “synod” means “to journey together” or “to accompany each other on the way.” The word may seem new or strange, but the concept is familiar.

The magi, those people willing to walk together like participants in a synod, can be our guides and models. More than the time and money required for their journey, they possessed a desire for more meaning in life. Their attitude urged them to read the signs of the times and to venture into the unknown. They humbly believed there was more wisdom in the world than they had yet discovered; they set off in a caravan that became the first Christian pilgrimage.

The lowly shepherds can also be our models and guides; they simply had to walk from the meadows and pastures into town, never leaving



Image: <https://freesvg.org/wisemen-magi>

Continued from page 8

the familiar territory they had known all their lives. But what they discovered right under their noses could not have been more enlightening.

One of my sisters reminded me and all of our siblings, just yesterday, of Mom's constant prayer for each of us: she prayed that God would send the right people into our lives at the time we most needed them. That is truly a "synodal" prayer! Whether we journey with camels or with sheep (or with angelic wings, for that matter), our journeys of life and of faith are always eased and enlightened by those we meet, by those with whom we interact, sharing stories and experiences, and by those we welcome into our lives for guidance, for friendship, for wisdom.

Pope Francis reminds us that we journey together all the time. We are a "synodal" people, always on the road together. Right now, the Pope has asked us to focus on this shared journey and to talk and listen to each other. To talk candidly and from the heart. To listen attentively and with great respect. As we talk and listen, he asks us to focus on two fundamental questions: How are we "doing Church" these days? How can we "do Church" better?

The shepherds and the magi are models for our synodal journey. Like them, we journey together to discover God's presence anew, again and again, as we follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit of God and work to create not another Church, but a different and better one, as Francis invites us.



Photo by: Heather Duggan

Synod Timeline

ARCHDIOCESE OF OTTAWA-CORNWALL



What Does All This Mean for Me? What Are You Asking Me to Do?

By Dorothy Wood

Here is how you can participate in this synodal process:

- ◆ **Attend one of the presentations** by Fr. John Renken or by Professor Catherine Clifford. If you are not able to tune into one of the live webinars, listen to/watch one of the recordings (see the link [on the parish website](#));
- ◆ **Keep an eye/ear out** for an announcement about the sharing circles hosted by the parish, where you will be invited to share your experience of Church and how that experience could be improved;
- ◆ **Consider inviting a family member or friend** who no longer practises their faith, has perhaps left the Church entirely or belongs to another faith tradition or to no faith, to come with you to share their thoughts on the Church;
- ◆ **Register** to participate in one of the sharing circles hosted by the parish: know that this is not meant to be a discussion or a debate but a time where we will be invited to listen to each other in silence and with respect; and
- ◆ **Pray** for all those involved in the synodal process throughout the world so we can all understand and recognize “what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Revelation 3:22).

All are needed. All are welcome!

Learn more!

Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall website:

English: <https://en.archoc.ca/synod-2021-2023>

Français: <https://fr.archoc.ca/synode-2021-2023>

Archdiocese link above also has links to:

RUAH, “Breath of Life” / RUAH, « Souffle de vie »

- English: <https://en.archoc.ca/ruah>
- Français: <https://fr.archoc.ca/ruah>

Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall Synod Facilitator’s Guide/Guide de l’animateur:

- English: <https://en.archoc.ca/documents/2021/12/Synod%202021%20-%20Facilitators%20Guide.pdf>
- Français: <https://fr.archoc.ca/documents/2021/11/Synode%20-%20Guide%20de%20lanimateur-3.pdf>

Vatican website:

<https://www.synod.va/en.html>

Vatican Synod Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/synod.va/>

Canadian Martyrs parish website:

<https://canadianmartyrs.org/synod-2021-2023/>

SYNODAL PRAYER

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.

