



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

For a Synodal Church

Archdiocese of Wellington

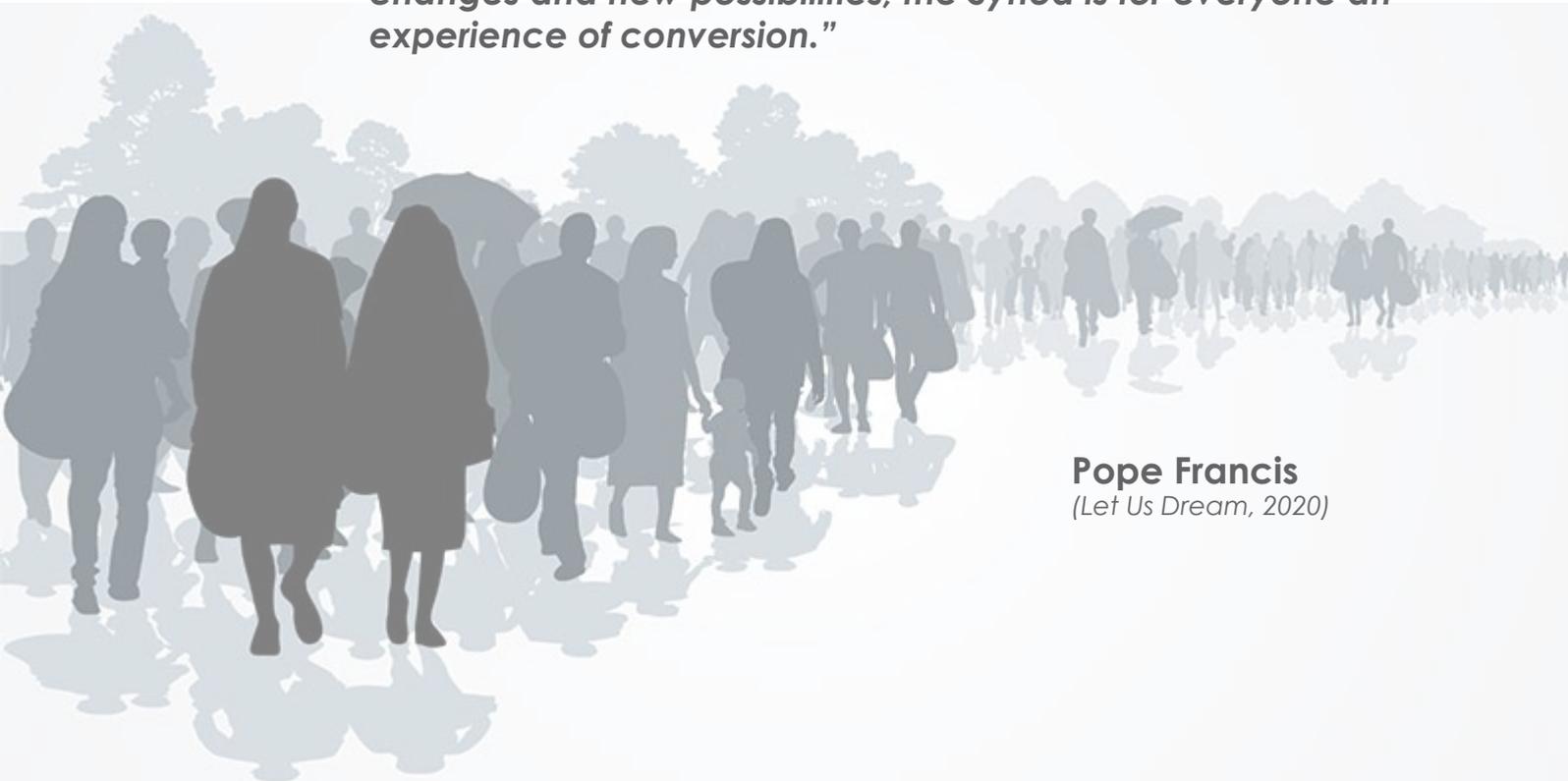
Te Rohe Pīhopa Katorika Matua o te Ūpoko o te Ika

Participation Booklet



“Synodality starts with hearing from the whole People of God. A Church that teaches must be firstly a Church that listens. Consulting all members of the Church is vital because, as the Second Vatican Council reminded us, the faithful as a whole are anointed by the Holy Spirit...”

What characterizes a synodal path is the role of the Holy Spirit. We listen, we discuss in groups, but above all we pay attention to what the Spirit has to say to us. That is why I ask everyone to speak frankly and to listen carefully to others because there, too, the Spirit is speaking. Open to changes and new possibilities, the Synod is for everyone an experience of conversion.”



Pope Francis
(Let Us Dream, 2020)



Archbishop of Wellington

PO Box 1937, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

September 2021

Dear People of God

I want you to be involved in this Synod process. Your baptism calls you and entitles you to be involved.

One of the most important presentations I have ever heard was in Rome in 2015 when Pope Francis made a wonderful speech at the 50th Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops. I remember him saying *“let us never forget this, the only authority is the authority of service”*. I have quoted that many times in the last few years. Pope Francis has told us that it is not a title, or a particular set of clothing, or an education that matters for us as leaders in Church, it is the way we serve. He knows we are called by baptism to journey together. He also said in the document *Evangelii Gaudium “it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would be passive recipients”*. EG120

In our Church nobody is to be a passive recipient. In the preparatory document for this Synod we have been given *“the ability to imagine a different future for the Church and her institutions in keeping with the Mission she has received”*.

I am looking forward very much to your involvement in imagining a different future for the Church. Please use this opportunity, it is essential that we do so. This Synod sets out to change the fact that most of the People of God have been passive spectators for years. You can help to change that. Please take up the invitation to be involved in this Synod process.

With all good wishes and every blessing

John A Cardinal Dew
Archbishop of Wellington

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PRAYER FOR THE SYNOD

ADSUMUS SANCTE SPIRITUS

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer Adsumus Sancte Spiritus, the first word of the original Latin, meaning, “We stand before You, Holy Spirit,” which has been historically used at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, and is attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 - 4 April 636). As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace. For the Synodal journey from 2021 to 2023, we propose the following simplified version, so that any group or liturgical assembly can pray it more easily.

**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.**



WHAT IS SYNODALITY?

BACKGROUND FOR THIS SYNOD

As the Church embarks on this synodal journey, we must strive to ground ourselves in experiences of authentic listening and discernment on the path of becoming the Church that God calls us to be.

By convening this Synod, Pope Francis invites the entire Church to reflect on a theme that is decisive for its life and mission: *"It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium."*³ Following in the wake of the renewal of the Church proposed by the Second Vatican Council, this common journey together is both a gift and a task. By reflecting together on our journey so far, the diverse members of the Church learn from one another's experiences and perspectives, guided by the Holy Spirit (PD, 1). Enlightened by God's Word and united in prayer, we will discern the processes to seek God's will and pursue the pathways to which God calls us – towards deeper communion, fuller participation, and greater openness to fulfilling our mission in the world. The International Theological Commission (ITC) describes synodality this way:

'Synod' is an ancient and venerable word in the Tradition of the Church, whose meaning draws on the deepest themes of Revelation [...] It indicates the path along which the People of God walk together. Equally, it refers to the Lord Jesus, who presents Himself as 'the way, the truth and the life' (Jn 14,6), and to the fact that Christians, His followers, were originally called 'followers of the Way' (cf. Acts 9,2; 19,9.23; 22,4; 24,14.22).

First and foremost, synodality denotes the particular style that qualifies the life and mission of the Church, expressing her nature as the People of God journeying together and gathering in assembly, summoned by the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel. Synodality ought to be expressed in the Church's ordinary way of living and working.

In this sense, synodality enables the entire People of God to walk forward together, listening to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, to participate in the mission of the Church in the communion that Christ establishes between us. This "walking together" is the most effective way of putting into practice the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God (PD, 1).

The entire People of God shares a common dignity and vocation through Baptism. All of us are called by virtue of our Baptism to be active participants in the life of the Church. In parishes, small Christian communities, lay movements, religious communities, and other forms of communion, women and men, young people and the elderly, we are all invited to listen to one another in order to hear the promptings of the Holy Spirit, who comes to guide our human efforts, breathing life and vitality into the Church and leading us into deeper communion for our mission in the world. As the Church embarks on this synodal journey, we must strive to ground ourselves in experiences of authentic listening and discernment on the path of becoming the Church that God calls us to be.

(Vad 1.2)

3 FRANCIS, Address for the ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops (17 October 2015).





SYNOD 2021 - 2023

THE OVERALL PROCESS

This synodal journey will commence both in the Vatican and in the local churches, starting with the Official Opening with the Holy Father in the Vatican on 9-10 October 2021. This will then be followed by an Official Opening in each local church on Sunday 17 October 2021.

In September 2021, the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops published a Preparatory Document, accompanied by a Questionnaire and a 'Vademecum', or Handbook, with proposals for consultation in each local church. These documents have been sent to all the local churches as well as religious orders, international lay movements and University faculties of Theology.

DIOCESAN PHASE

October 2021 - February 2022

The objective of this phase is to consult the People of God so that the synodal process is carried out through listening to all of the baptised. This consultation will conclude with a pre-synodal meeting, which will be the culmination of diocesan discernment. In the Southern Hemisphere, this process will take place between October 2021 and February 2022 with responses invited up until 12th December 2021.

NATIONAL / CONTINENTAL PHASE

February - April 2022

At the conclusion of the diocesan phase, each local church will submit their contributions to their local Bishops' Conference. A period of discernment will begin for the bishops gathered to listen to what the Spirit has inspired in the churches entrusted to them. Their synthesis will then be sent to the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops along with the contributions of each of the local churches. Each local Bishops' Conference synthesis will feed into a pre-Synodal Continental gathering before March 2023.

UNIVERSAL PHASE

September 2022 - October 2023

The documents from the seven continents will then become part of the '*Instrumentum Laboris*', or 'working document' for the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October 2023.



DIOCESAN PHASE

Local churches and groups gather to discern and respond to the synod questions. These responses are submitted to the diocese.

... the purpose of the Synod is not to produce documents, but “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 ...

(PD32)

CONTINENTAL PHASE

Submissions are synthesised into a single New Zealand document, outlining responses received from each diocese. This document is then combined into an Oceania document and submitted to the Synod of Bishops.

UNIVERSAL PHASE

Each document from the 7 continents is brought before the Synod of Bishops, where they discern the people's voice to decide the direction of the Church moving forward.



THE DIOCESAN PHASE

Everyone in the Archdiocese is invited to participate in the first phase of this global Synod consultation process (October to December 2021). This booklet gives some background information on the fundamental question of the Synod and the ten main themes being presented for reflection.

“...we are all invited to listen to one another in order to hear the promptings of the Holy Spirit, who comes to guide our human efforts, breathing life and vitality into the Church and leading us into deeper communion for our mission in the world.”

(Vad 1.2)

DISCERNMENT

Whether the response to this document is from an individual or a group, it should be the product of **prayerful discernment**. Discernment is a process of making decisions or arriving at answers in a prayerful way. Many of you will be familiar with it in the context of The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. Pope Francis often talks about discernment:

“Discernment is one of the things that worked inside St. Ignatius. For him it is an instrument of struggle in order to know the Lord and follow him more closely... Discernment is always done in the presence of the Lord, looking at the signs, listening to the things that happen, the feeling of the people, especially the poor.”

Pope Francis, August 2013

Father James Martin SJ explains the essence of discernment:

“At heart, the process begins with the belief that God wants a person, or a group, to make good, healthy and life-giving decisions; and through the ‘discernment of spirits,’ that is, sorting out what is coming from God and what is not, one gains clarity about the best path. God therefore both wants and enables individuals and groups to arrive at good decisions.”

Our relationship with God is at the heart of discernment. God respects our freedom by acting very gently with us. This means that we need to continually fine-tune our listening to God. Listening to God amid the other interior and exterior voices in our lives is discernment.

How do we know that we are listening to God and following the movement of the Spirit within ourselves or in a group? Ask, *“Am I at peace with this? Am I at ease now, especially if what I had previously thought was the best course of action is not what I now think? Or am I uneasy or anxious?”*

A good discernment process brings clarity and inner peace. If there is unease or anxiety, personal issues are getting in the way.

INDIVIDUAL DISCERNMENT

If you wish to make an individual response, then this simple process may help you develop clarity about what you want to say.

- 1 Take some silent time to pray about how you will arrive at your response. Don't focus on the theme initially. Instead seek the freedom to follow where God leads, to let go of biases and negative feelings, and ask for the patience to allow your response to evolve over time.
- 2 After a time of prayer, reflect upon the words:
“A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together”.
 - What is my first response to these words?
 - Am I led towards any particular theme?
- 3 When you come to consider one of the themes, be willing to first let thoughts and feelings which may be influencing your response to surface:
 - How do I feel about this theme?
 - Are my feelings the result of my experience? Are they influenced by other people?
 - What happens if I bring my imagination into play?
 - What is God saying to me about this theme?

Negative thoughts and emotions or feelings of anxiety triggered by the theme get in the way of hearing what God is saying. We know we are listening to God when our thoughts are refreshing, peaceful, generate new inspiration and ideas, and direct us beyond ourselves.

- 4 Make notes as you reflect for use in preparing your input to the consultation. Share your response in a group or send it directly to the Archdiocese using the online tool (p.13).



GROUP DISCERNMENT

A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

A suitable method for group dialogue which resonates with the principles of synodality is the Spiritual Conversation method, which promotes active participation, attentive listening, reflective speaking, and spiritual discernment.

Participants form small groups of about 6-7 persons from diverse backgrounds. This method takes about an hour and comprises three rounds. It is a prayerful process.

In the first round, after a time of silent prayer everyone takes equal turns to share the fruit of his or her prayer, in relation to one of the reflection questions circulated beforehand (pp. 14-18). There is no discussion in this round and all participants simply listen deeply to each person and attend to how the Holy Spirit is moving within oneself, within the person speaking, and in the group as a whole. This is followed by a time of silence to note one's thoughts and feelings.

In the second round, participants share what struck them most in the first round **that someone else has shared**, and what moved them during the time of silence. Some dialogue can also occur, and the same spiritual attentiveness is maintained. Once again this is followed by a time of silence.

Finally in the third round participants reflect on what seems to be resonating in the conversation and what moved them most deeply. New insights and even unresolved questions are also noted. Spontaneous prayers of gratitude can conclude the conversation. Usually each small group will have a facilitator and note-taker.

Once the group dialogue has taken place, participants should review and share about their experience of the process within their small group.

- How was their experience?
- What were the ups and downs?
- What new and refreshing insights might they have discovered?
- What have they learned about the synodal way of proceeding?
- How was God present and at work during their time together?

Participants should then decide on the feedback they wish to communicate. The guiding questions for the diocesan synthesis as outlined (pp. 14-18) can be used as a basis for this feedback at the local level.

HOW YOU CAN RESPOND

Input to the participation process is welcome from both individuals and from groups. Your response can cover all the themes, just one theme or a selection of them. The questions accompanying each of the themes can be used as a starting point or helpful guideline. Your response to the theme should not be limited by the questions.

There are multiple ways you can respond:

ONLINE: Visit www.wn.catholic.org.nz/about/archdiocesan-synod and follow the link to the questions. Alternatively you can access the link through the news item on the [Archdiocesan homepage](#): **“Take part in the Synod”**.

E-MAIL: Download the Word document **“Synod participation response”** from the Archdiocesan website. To do this go to www.wn.catholic.org.nz/about/archdiocesan-synod/. Parish Offices are also able to provide the Word document. Email your response **in Word format** to synod@wn.catholic.org.nz.

POSTAL RESPONSE: handwrite or type your response to the questions and post it to: Office of the Archbishop, Archdiocese of Wellington.
PO Box 1937, Wellington 6140.

VERBAL RESPONSE: if there are reasons why you find it difficult to make a written response you are welcome to ring us to see if it is possible to provide a verbal response. Call 04 496 1715.



THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

The Synod poses the following fundamental question:

A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together:” How is this “journeying together” happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?



In order to respond, we are invited to:

RECALL OUR EXPERIENCES:

Ask ourselves, what experiences in our local Church come to mind when we talk about journeying together?

REREAD THESE EXPERIENCES MORE DEEPLY:

What joys did they bring? What difficulties and obstacles have they involved? What hurts has the journey involved? What insights have emerged?

GATHER THE FRUITS TO SHARE:

Where, in these experiences, can the Spirit be heard or seen? What is the Spirit asking of us? What are we doing well? What needs to change? What steps do we need to take? Where do we agree? What paths are opening up for us? (SynPrep26)

LIVED SYNODALITY

The following ten themes highlight significant aspects of our 'lived synodality' (PD, 30). In responding to these questions, it is helpful to remember that "journeying together" occurs in two deeply interconnected ways. First, we journey together with one another as the People of God. Next, we journey together as the People of God with the entire human family. These two perspectives enrich one another and are helpful for our common discernment towards deeper communion and more fruitful mission.

Input to the participation process is welcome from both individuals and from groups. Your response can cover all the themes, just one theme or a selection of them. The questions accompanying each of the following ten themes can be used as a starting point or helpful guideline. Your response to the theme should not be limited by the questions.

1. THE JOURNEYING COMPANIONS

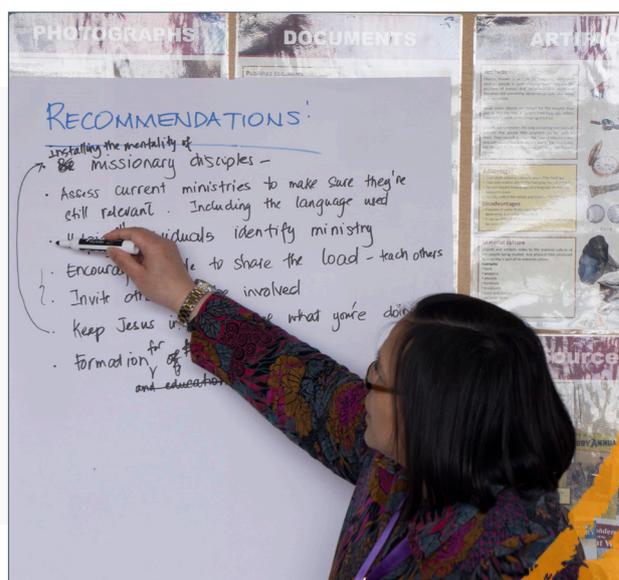
In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road.

In our local Church, who are those who "walk together"? When we say, 'our Church,' who is part of that? Who wants to journey with us? How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are being left behind or lost from view?

2. LISTENING

Listening is the first step - it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.

Who do we need to listen to? How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore? How are lay people listened to, especially women and young people? What helps or prevents our listening? How well do we listen to those on the peripheries and those with whom we disagree? What space is there for the voice of minorities, the discarded, and the excluded? What prejudices and stereotypes prevent our listening? How do we listen to the social and cultural context in which we live?



3. SPEAKING OUT

Everyone is invited to speak boldly and courageously in freedom, truth, and love.

What helps or hinders us to speak out responsibly in our local Church and in society? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us? How are our relationships with the media? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community and how are they chosen?

4. CELEBRATING

“Walking together” is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.

How do prayer and liturgical celebrations inspire and guide our common life and mission? How might liturgical celebrations fail to do this? How do they inspire the most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of everyone in the liturgy?

5. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MISSION

Synodality (‘walking together’) serves the mission of the Church, in which we are all called to participate.

As missionary disciples, how is every baptised person called to participate in that mission? What stops us from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting? How does our community support those of us who serve society in so

many ways (social and political involvement, scientific research, education, promoting social justice, protecting human rights, caring for the environment, etc.)? How could we better support each other to live out our service to society in a missionary way?



6. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it enables mutual understanding.

How do diverse peoples in our community gather for dialogue? What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church? How do neighbouring parishes, communities and dioceses work with each other? What issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to? What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious connection? How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: politics, economics, culture, civil society, and those who live in poverty?

7. WITH THE OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

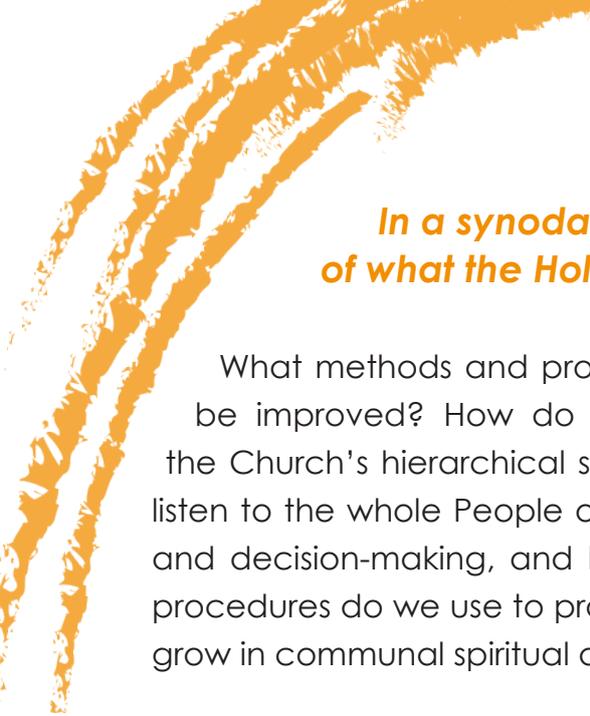
The dialogue between Christians of different denominations, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.

What relationship does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? What do we share and how do we journey together? What fruits have we drawn from walking together? What are the difficulties? How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

8. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION

A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.

How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility practiced? How are things evaluated and who does this? How do we promote lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people? Have we had fruitful experiences of synodality on a local level? Are 'synodal bodies' effective at the level of the local Church (Parish and Archdiocesan Pastoral Councils, etc.)? How can we foster a more synodal approach in our participation and leadership?



9. DISCERNING AND DECIDING

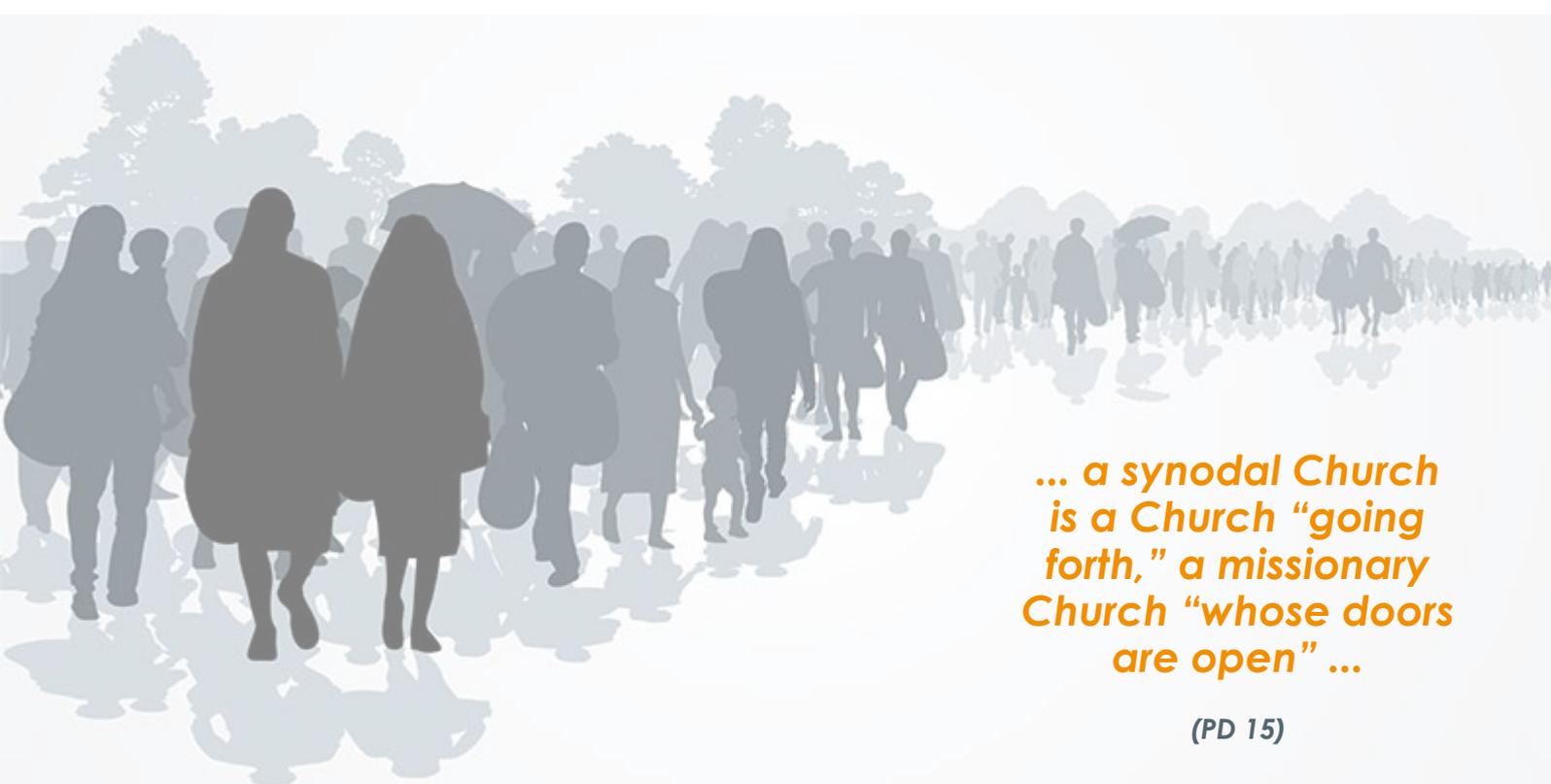
In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.

What methods and processes do we use in decision-making? How can they be improved? How do we promote participation in decision-making within the Church's hierarchical structure? Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God? What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice? What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability? How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?

10. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY

Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning.

How does our church community form people to be more capable of “walking together,” listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue? What formation is offered to foster discernment and the exercise of authority in this synodal way?



... a synodal Church is a Church “going forth,” a missionary Church “whose doors are open” ...

(PD 15)

AVOIDING PITFALLS

As on any journey, we need to be aware of possible pitfalls that could hamper our progress during this time of synodality. The following are common temptations that must be avoided in order to promote the vitality and fruitfulness of the Synodal Process.

1. The temptation to want to lead ourselves instead of being led by God.
2. The temptation to focus on ourselves and our immediate concerns.
3. The temptation to only see “problems.”
4. The temptation to focus only on structures.
5. The temptation not to look beyond the visible confines of the Church.
6. The temptation to lose focus on the objectives of the Synodal Process.
7. The temptation of conflict and division.
8. The temptation to treat the Synod as a kind of a parliament.
9. The temptation to listen only to those who are already involved in Church activities.



A WORD OF GRATITUDE

A sincere word of gratitude to all those who organize, coordinate, and participate in this Synodal Process. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we make up the living stones through whom God builds up the Church that he desires for the third millennium (1 Peter 2:5).

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles and Mother of the Church, intercede for us as we journey together on the path that God sets before us.

As in the Upper Room at Pentecost, may her maternal care and intercession accompany us as we build up our communion with one another and carry out our mission in the world.

*With her, we say together as the People of God:
“Let it be with me according to your word”
(Luke 1:38).*

Ka pū te ruha, ka hao te rangatahi

As an old net withers another is remade



CHURCH MISSION

Church Mission is the pastoral support team that seeks to enable intentional missionary discipleship in the parishes of the Archdiocese of Wellington.

Visit <https://www.wn.catholic.org.nz/about/church-mission/>

Archdiocese of Wellington, PO Box 1937, Wellington 6041
04 496 1715; www.wn.catholic.org.nz