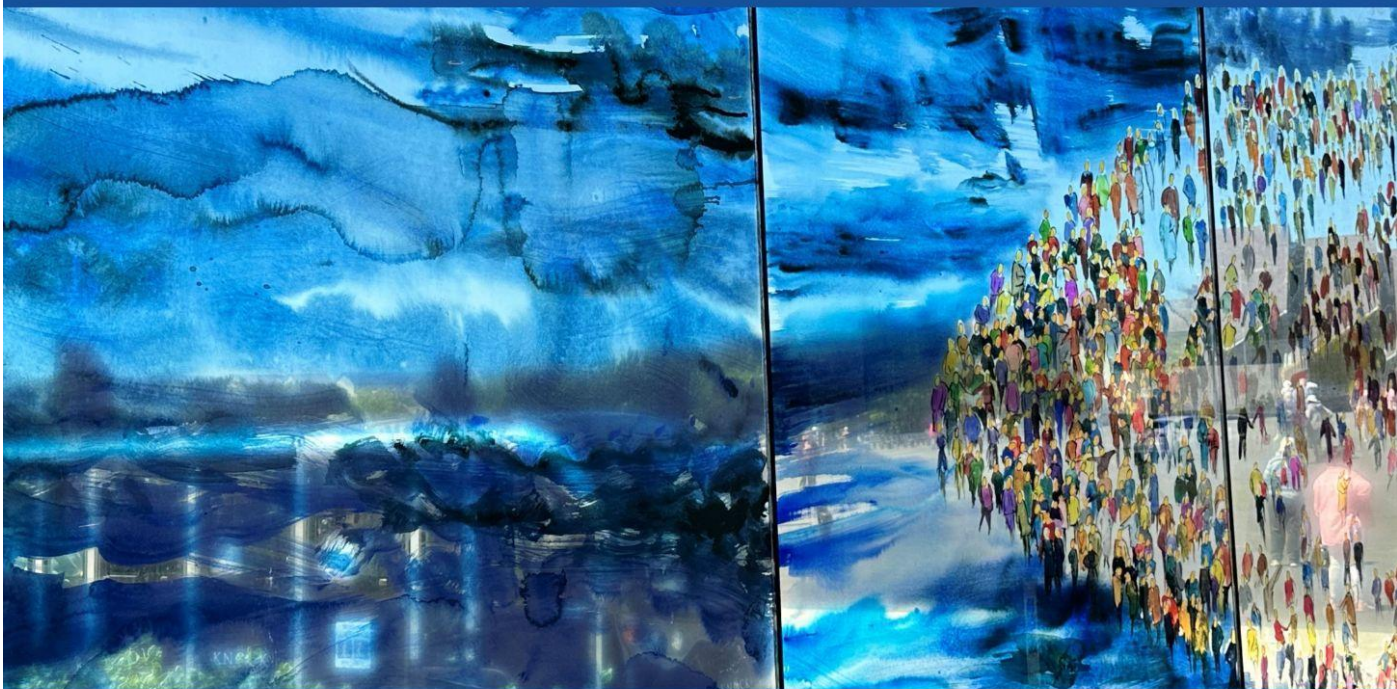


Towards October 2025

Preparing for the National Pre-synodal
Assembly



Facilitator's Session Guide Spring 2025 Gatherings



The Synodal Pathway
of the Catholic Church in Ireland



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Section 1: The Synodal Pathway So Far

In March 2021, the Irish Bishops' Conference initiated an encouraging and spirit filled journey by launching the Synodal Pathway for the Catholic Church in Ireland. This is a process that will culminate in a National Synodal Assembly or assemblies within five years of its inception.

From the outset, the goal of this journey was to guide the Catholic Church in Ireland toward becoming a more open, inclusive, and collaborative community. Shortly after the launch of the Irish Synodal Pathway, in September 2021, Pope Francis announced the theme for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops, *For a Synodal Church, Communion, Participation and Mission*, inviting the global Church to reflect on the theme of synodality—which means walking together as one community, brothers and sisters in faith.

With a shared vision inspired by Pope Francis and embraced by the Irish Bishops, the Irish Synodal Pathway was established as a prayerful process of listening and discernment. Its aim was to engage the People of God in meaningful dialogue, shaping the Church's future in Ireland.

Recognising the challenges of a changing society, the Bishops highlighted the urgent need for welcome, unity, and outreach to the marginalised. They acknowledged the impacts of secularisation, declining vocations, and the trauma of clerical abuse. In response, they invited the Catholic Church in Ireland to embark on a reflective journey, listening deeply to the Holy Spirit's guidance for renewal and transformation.

To support the synodal pathway, a National Steering Committee and Task Group were established for an initial two years to encourage active listening and participation across the Catholic Church in Ireland. In September 2022, Julieann Moran was appointed General Secretary of the Synodal Pathway, and by September 2024, a newly reformed National Synodal Team began its term.

Through conversations across Ireland, including the National Gathering in Athlone, the Irish synthesis, and the final document of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod, people have expressed a deep longing for a more compassionate and welcoming Church—one that humbly acknowledges abuse and commits to building a future grounded in integrity and care for all.

Accountability, spirituality, and formation for synodality have emerged as key priorities. Strengthening relationships between clergy, laity, dioceses, and all Christians across Ireland is essential. Notably, survivors of abuse, young people, lay leaders, and those who feel marginalised or distant from the Church have shared their experiences, helping to shape a renewed vision for the Church.

While this vision is taking shape, much work is now needed to foster a synodal Church where shared responsibility and participation are the norm in parishes. Over the next year, a stronger focus on building relationships and fostering participation is essential in order to enhance community engagement and demonstrate the fruits of this new way of being Church in Ireland.

With the publication of the Irish synthesis and the Synod's final document, the Catholic Church in Ireland is ready to deepen its synodal journey and refine its priorities. This transformative moment brings challenges, including sharing the Gospel in a secular society, empowering parishes to engage all members, healing from past wounds, and reaching those marginalised or disconnected from the Church.

Synodal gatherings across the country have revealed a strong desire for a humble Church that owns its past, values transparency, prioritises accountability, and commits to real transformation. The challenges are significant, but they must be faced with a determination to embrace synodality in a way that creates lasting change, not just surface improvements.

More information on the synodal journey of the Catholic Church in Ireland can be found at www.icatholic.ie/synod/

Section 2: The Irish Synodal Pathway in 2025

As the Catholic Church in Ireland refocuses its gaze on the *Irish Synodal Pathway* and enters the implementation phase of the Universal Synod, embedding the synodal vision cultivated over the past three years into parish life becomes essential. The Church is undoubtedly on the path towards becoming a truly synodal Church. However, our shared journey with the Holy Spirit and one another must continue with renewed enthusiasm and fervour.

Looking ahead to 2025, the Church anticipates an important year of reflection, discernment, and action. With the focus shifting from the work of the Universal Synod on Synodality to Ireland's own synodal pathway, the Catholic Church in Ireland has identified several key priorities and goals for the year ahead. These include:

1. To reflect in Spring and on 18th October 2025 on priorities emerging from three years of listening and identify key questions for future synodal gatherings in Ireland. The aim is to refine and prioritise existing themes from the consultation that took place in Ireland, rather than seeking new ones.
2. To reflect on the final document from the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod on Synodality. This document is significant as Pope Francis has chosen not to issue a post-synodal apostolic exhortation or letter, instead embracing the discernment of the entire Church. It is now part of Church teaching, and bishops, clergy, religious, and laity across Ireland are called to consider how to integrate this discernment into their lived reality, cultural context and pastoral activity.
3. A key goal for 2025 will be to embed synodality and the synodal method throughout the Irish Church at every level. This involves making synodal practices—such as active listening and shared decision-making—integral and expected characteristics of Church life and community engagement.

The journey during 2025 will be approached through the stance of “Hope,” which reflects the spirit of the Jubilee Year in the Universal Church. In spring 2025, diocesan and parish gatherings will bring people together to review the themes that emerged from listening in Ireland and identify priorities for action to be considered at future Synodal Assemblies in October 2026 and beyond.

These gatherings will lead to a national pre-assembly on 18th October 2025, where representatives will reflect on the year's insights and set future priorities for the Catholic Church in Ireland. Throughout the year, parishes, dioceses, and groups are encouraged to implement the Universal Synod's outcomes, considering them in light of Ireland's unique context.

What the October 2025 Pre-Synodal Assembly Is

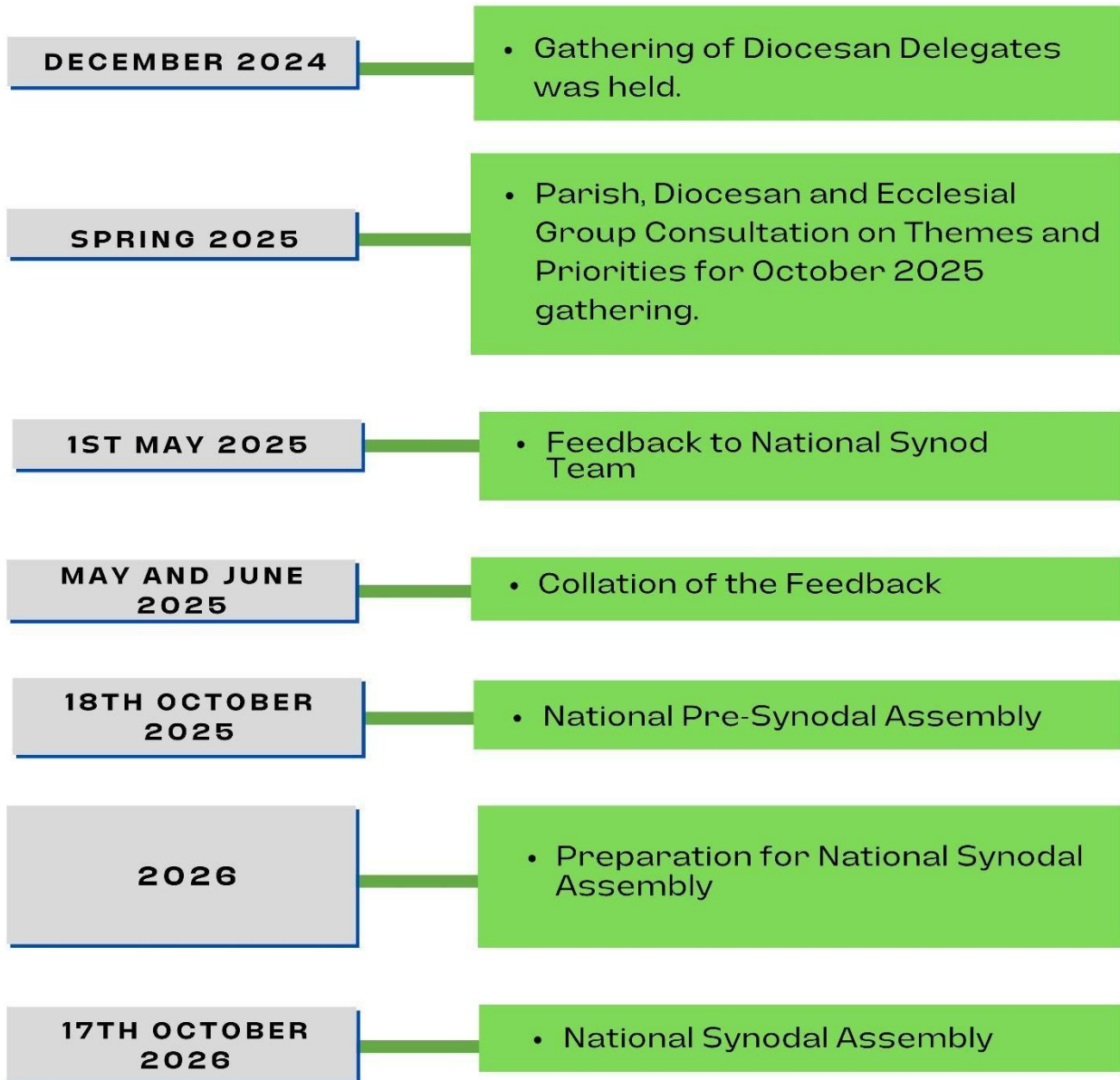
The pre-assembly gathering brings together representatives from across the Church to reflect on insights from listening sessions and the Synod on Synodality. Its goal is to refine and prioritise existing themes, focusing on how they can be integrated into the Church's practices and structures to shape its future direction in Ireland.

The October 2025 Gathering is a key moment that brings together three years of listening and reflection that lays the foundations for Synodal assemblies in 2026 and beyond and provides the opportunity for us to take meaningful steps towards real renewal.

What the October 2025 Pre-Assembly Gathering Is Not

The gathering is not a decision-making body that will resolve all outstanding issues within the Irish Church but a formative and discerning space, aimed at strengthening the progress made during the synodal pathway of the last three years. Thus ensuring that the Catholic Church in Ireland continues to respond meaningfully to the needs and voices of the faithful.

Irish Synodal Pathway - Timeline for 2025



The Synodal Pathway
of the Catholic Church in Ireland

www.ccl.ie

Section 4. Process Leading to the October 2025 Gathering

The process leading up to the 18th October 2025 gathering will involve both continued dialogue and intentional formation in the art and spirituality of ecclesial discernment. This preparation will include the following steps:

1. **Spring 2025**

The session outlined in this guide is rolled out at local level.

2. **Post-Easter 2025**

The responses to the second question are gathered at national level, collated and coherently thematised as priorities.

3. **18th October 2025**

Pre-Synodal Assembly:

A national gathering of diocesan representatives.

Presentation of Priorities:

Participants at the Pre-Synodal Assembly will review what has emerged from the Spring 2025 consultation in preparation for the 2026 assembly, which will take place on 17th October 2026.

Discernment and Decision:

Participants will prayerfully discern and select key priorities for action.

The focus will be on deepening reflection on these priorities in the 12 months leading up to the 2026 assembly.

(It is important to note that with the publication of the Final Document from the Universal Synod on Synodality, dioceses and parishes can begin to implement the action points that have emerged.)



Section 5: Facilitating Spring 2025 Session

Who Should Facilitate this Piece of Work?

Ideally the lead facilitators would be drawn from the following:

- Members of the Diocesan Synodal Team
- Those who have completed the Synodal Leadership Training Programme
- People with facilitation skills who are familiar with the ‘Conversation in the Spirit’ methodology

Step 1: Preliminary Planning for Spring 2025 Gatherings

Equipping Diocesan, Parish and Group Facilitators

- Diocese and groups are asked to meet facilitators to prepare in advance in order to familiarise them with the session.
- The process will require small group facilitators who have basic facilitation skills and can implement the ‘Conversation in the Spirit’ method with a small group.
- It is advised that special attention must be given to considering who you will invite to your gathering and how you can broaden participation.

Pay particular attention to:

Invitation and Outreach

- This can involve many people who can reach out to those in the community, particularly those who are most distant.
- It will be helpful to have 1-2 people devoted to coordinating this effort.

Hospitality and Welcome

- Consider hospitality requirements for your gathering and identify individuals to greet and welcome participants.
- A café or banquet style setup using round tables often lends itself to fostering authentic and meaningful conversations.

Ambience

- Creating a safe space where everyone feels comfortable and able to share their thoughts freely is important. The space should be neutral, warm, and inviting.

Step 2: Preparing for the Session

Choosing a date, time, and venue:

Choose whether your sessions will be in person or virtual. Set a date and time for your session/s..

When considering onsite sessions remember to:

- Consider amplification, room capacity, and ease of getting into small groups when preparing for onsite sessions
- Consider the time of day or day of week when planning a session, especially if you are targeting a certain group of people
- Consider accessibility needs for people with additional needs.

Set up a registration system:

- While you can welcome people who do not register, it is always helpful to have a sense of how many people you can expect.
- In the registration form ask if anyone has accessibility needs.
- Make sure to adhere to relevant data protection guidelines and legislation.

Preparatory Materials

Engagement with the preparatory materials is essential for ensuring a meaningful and successful session.

What to do in advance of the session?

- Read Resource on Hope - This resource explains how Hope frames the themes we will discuss and is vital for preparation. *See Appendix 1 for resource on Christian Hope*
- Watch the videos on themes - These videos provide key insights and reflection. It is crucial that everyone watches them beforehand so they can fully engage in the session.

See link below and Appendix 2 for detailed explanation of the themes:

<https://synod.ie/video-resources-for-regional-meetings-in-preparation-for-the-pre-synodal-assembly/>

- Share with Participants - Dioceses, facilitators, and leaders should ensure all materials are distributed widely in advance of your session.
- Why is this Activity Important - The videos and associated resources provide essential context for the session and help everyone to prepare. Please make preparation a priority!

Step 3: Checklist For Facilitators in advance of Hosting Spring 2025 Session

Venue and Setup

- Confirm venue booking, accessibility, and capacity.
- Arrange seating to encourage participation (e.g., round tables for group discussions).
- Ensure proper lighting, ventilation, and heating/cooling.
- Check availability of a projector, screen, or whiteboard if needed.
- Provide a podium, microphone, or sound system for the facilitator if the venue is large.

Materials for Participants

- Printed copies of the session outline resources and other materials.
- Name tags for attendees.
- Notebooks, pens, or markers for note taking.
- Feedback template for recording and consolidation of input at the end.

Facilitator Resources and Technology

- A detailed facilitator guide and session plan.
- Slides or visual aids for presentation.
- Laptop or tablet for presenting slides.
- Test equipment beforehand to ensure it works smoothly.

Hospitality

- Refreshments, such as tea, coffee, water, and light snacks.
- A welcome table with sign-in sheets or registration lists.

Support Staff

- Volunteers for setup, participant registration, and troubleshooting.
- Someone to manage technology during the session.
- Ensure that a note-taker and timekeeper is appointed for each small group.

Post-Session

- Ensure notetakers leave their feedback notes.
- Collate and forward your feedback to the diocesan synodal team.

Note that diocesan submissions must be forwarded to the National Synodal Team by 1st May.

Section 6: Outline of the Spring 2025 Session

Session Length: 2 hrs

1. Welcome and Introductions (5 Minutes)

2. Context setting: (10 Minutes)

- *Presentation: The Journey so Far*
- *Presentation: Timeline Presentation from December 2024 to 17th October 2026*
- *Outline the Purpose and Outcome of the Session*

3. Prayer (10 Minutes)

- *Sign of the Cross*
- *A moment of silence*
- *Pray the Christus Vivit Prayer*
- *Read the Scripture Passage aloud from Romans 5*
- *Brief introduction to the Hope Video*
- *Show the Hope Video – making it clear that this too is part of the reflective prayer*
- *Invite those present to share a Word or Phrase in small groups*
- *We hold these shared words in a moment of silence*

See Appendix 3 for prayer to be used in this session.

4. Highlight The Three Contexts (15 minutes)

Offer a reminder of:

- *Your local consultations and Diocesan Synthesis*
- *The National Synthesis for the Universal Synod*
- *The Final Universal Synod Document*

Then introduce the themes and distribute the handout. See Appendix 4

Give Participants 10 minutes to read the Themes Handout.

5. Conversations in the Spirit using the three questions in the facilitators' guide. (1hr)

Three rounds of questions reflecting on the themes.

See Appendix 5 for Conversations in the Spirit Guide and Questions to be considered during this time.

6. Plenary – A flavour of the conversations (15 minutes)

What are the insights that are emerging?

7. Final Prayer Moment: Litany of Hope (5 Minutes)

Conclude with the Litany of Hope prayer, emphasising unity and hope for the journey ahead.

Conclude the gathering with the Sign of the Cross.

See Appendix 3

See Appendix 6 for template for collation of themes and other feedback from Spring 2025 gatherings.

Appendix 1: An Exploration of Christian Hope

Christian Hope

Before you begin to read this document, stop for a moment and reflect on the question ‘What is hope?’ For most people the answer would be close to the dictionary definition of hope. Something similar to ‘looking forward to something desirable happening in the future’. We probably would accompany it with a concrete example like ‘I hope I will enjoy my holiday in Spain’, ‘I hope the football team I support will win the cup’, or ‘I hope I will have lots of money to buy all the things I would like’. All of these are desirable things and certainly reflect the emotion-based hope we all indulge in from time to time. Would we, however, consider the following statements as a true reflection of hope?

- Hope is the courage of the abuse victim who speaks out.
- Hope is the woman who demands her voice be heard, trusting in her worth and dignity.
- Hope is the young person who cherishes their faith, holding strong against peer pressure.
- Hope is the faithful lay person who yearns for deeper involvement in their parish, believing in a life of service.
- Hope is the deacon, priest, bishop or religious who lives their vocation joyfully and authentically despite the secular nature of the world today.

Perhaps we would struggle to fit these statements into our understanding of hope. We tend to think of hope as a fancy or woolly aspiration, a daydream that brightens a gloomy day, a feeling that makes us look forward to tomorrow, next week or next year.

Hope, in the Christian sense, however, is much deeper than that. Christian hope is rooted in faith and in the love of God, exemplified by Jesus Christ. This hope is nurtured and sustained by the Holy Spirit, who sustains and motivates those who believe, encouraging them to persevere even in the face of suffering. Hope therefore is more like the resilience and patience we need to navigate life’s challenges. Such hope is required in a world where instant gratification often overshadows deeper spiritual fulfilment.

There is a need for us to always be on the lookout for the ‘signs of hope’ in society even in these unsettled and troubling times. Such hope is to be found in the work of the Church that promotes peace and justice and defends the rights of the most vulnerable in society from the child in the womb to the elderly person suffering from loneliness; from the family suffering from hunger and poverty in the developing world to the drug addict living on the streets; from the migrant searching for peace and security to the survivor of abuse looking to rebuild their shattered lives.

The Church’s mission is to be a sign of hope for all people in the midst of negativity and fear. In that mission each of us are called to be people of hope through acts of kindness, joy, and love, offering a message of faith and encouragement to all those around us who are in need.

Christian hope is, of course, rooted in belief in the eternal life that was won for us through Christ’s death and resurrection. This hope is the very basis of our Christian faith. It offers a sense of purpose because life is not a meaningless journey, but a journey towards God. Without this hope, human dignity is diminished and this, ultimately, leads to despair. For Christians the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the foundation of all hope, as it illustrates that death is not the end but a passage to eternal life. Through Baptism, Christians share in Christ’s victory over death, symbolising new life. The great Christian martyrs exemplified this hope by sacrificing their lives for their faith, serving as witnesses to the promise of eternal life. We are all called, therefore, to embrace Christian hope as an anchor amid life’s storms, drawing our strength from God.

Appendix 2: Information for Facilitators on Themes and Pastoral Questions that have Emerged from the Synodal Process

Theme in the Irish Synthesis	What the final document of the universal synod said about these themes
Family	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Domestic Church: The family is referred to as the "domestic Church," emphasising its role as the primary setting where individuals learn and live out synodal values, such as love, trust, and forgiveness. 2. Foundation for Synodal Living: Families serve as crucial spaces for experiencing and practicing the fundamentals of a synodal Church, including co-responsibility, authority exercised with love, and the ability to discern and make decisions together. 3. Humanisation and Growth: Families are highlighted as environments that humanise individuals through shared relationships, where people can explore and develop legitimate differences while reinforcing equal dignity and reciprocity 4. Support in Times of Brokenness: Despite challenges, including brokenness and suffering, families are seen as places where people learn to exchange gifts of reconciliation and understanding, fostering essential relational skills for Church life. 5. Collaborative Role in Church Mission: Families are not merely recipients of pastoral care but active participants, particularly in areas like child and youth education. The Church recognises that families have a unique role in shaping and nurturing the faith of future generations.
Catechesis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formative Role of Catechesis: Catechesis is identified as essential for Christian formation, moving beyond a mere introductory stage to continuously inspire missionary outreach. 2. Connection to Mission: Catechesis should not just educate but also actively lead individuals towards missionary engagement, adapting teachings to meet people's real-life contexts and existential concerns. 3. A 'Laboratory of Dialogue': Catechesis is envisioned as a space for dialogue, responding to the unique questions and spiritual needs of contemporary society, facilitating meaningful exchanges with diverse groups 4. Focus on Mercy and Experience: It is recommended that catechetical teachings integrate mercy and relate closely to the lived experiences of people, bringing teachings to the Church's "existential peripheries" while maintaining fidelity to the Catechism. 5. Importance of Catechists: Catechists are highlighted as crucial resources for nurturing faith, with the suggestion that their contributions be more appreciated and supported within Church communities. This aligns with the principle of synodality, counteracting a "logic of delegation". 6. Response to Migration: Recognising global migration, the document underscores that catechesis should foster deeper relationships among Churches and support migrants in their integration and spiritual formation. 7. Diverse Formative Settings: The Christian community's presence in various educational spaces—such as schools, universities, and vocational training

	<p>centres—supports catechetical efforts in connecting faith with broader social, political, and cultural education.</p> <p>8. Dialogue between Faith and Culture: Catholic schools and universities are recognised for bridging faith and culture, providing moral education, and nurturing values that contrast with the competitive and individualistic tendencies of secular society.</p> <p>9. Role in Ecumenism and Intercultural Engagement: Catechetical institutions are encouraged to embrace intercultural and interreligious dialogue, promoting a shared commitment to human development across religious traditions.</p> <p>10. Transformative Potential: Overall, catechesis is portrayed as transformative, aiming to be inclusive, participative, and oriented towards real-world issues, thereby enriching the faith journey within the modern Church.</p>
Education	<p>1. Importance of Catholic Educational Institutions: Catholic educational institutions, such as schools and universities, are pivotal in promoting moral and ethical values, aiming to form individuals rooted in Christ and countering individualistic and competitive societal norms.</p> <p>2. Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue: These institutions encourage interfaith and intercultural dialogue, often being one of the few settings where young people encounter the Church. This educational outreach is appreciated by other religious traditions as a contribution to human development.</p> <p>3. Synodal Formation: Synodal formation in education emphasises shared responsibility, requiring a collaborative approach among all members of the Church, including laity and clergy, to foster a united mission.</p> <p>4. Education for Cultural Challenges: Formation in Catholic schools and institutions aims to address contemporary cultural challenges, especially in the digital space, where students are taught critical skills for safe and responsible navigation of the internet. This approach acknowledges both the potential and the risks of digital media.</p> <p>5. Renewed Investment: The Church calls for renewed investment in forming educators who model the teachings they impart, aiming to provide an engaging, transformative education across intellectual, relational, and spiritual dimensions.</p>
Youth	<p>1. The Voice of the Young: Children hold a vital place in the Christian community. Their voices are considered essential for the community’s synodality and missionary potential, embodying values that should be nurtured and included.</p> <p>2. Catalysts for Renewal: Young people are viewed as instrumental in the Church’s renewal, especially through their commitment to fellowship, social justice, and environmental care. Their values of inclusivity and critique are seen as catalysts for creating a more welcoming Church community.</p> <p>3. Accompaniment and Discernment: The document emphasises the need for patient accompaniment and discernment for young people, drawing from experiences proposed during the 2018 Synod on Young People. This includes guiding them through education, service, prayer, and sacramental life.</p>

	<p>4. Youth Synod 2018: Revisiting the 2018 proposal for a structured accompaniment experience for young people is suggested to enhance their apostolic engagement and personal growth within the Church.</p>
<p>Liturgy</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Importance of Sunday Eucharist: The Eucharist, especially on Sundays, is emphasised as the primary gathering point for the People of God, where unity within the Church is both symbolised and realised. 2. Visible Community: Active, conscious participation by the faithful, alongside different ministries and presiding bishops or priests, makes the Christian community visible, fulfilling shared responsibility for the mission. 3. Liturgical Diversity: The Eucharist teaches the Church to balance unity and plurality, embracing diverse liturgical traditions, vocations, and ministries while maintaining a unified Church body. 4. Spiritual Harmony: It highlights that the Spirit creates harmony, not uniformity, and all ecclesial gifts are intended for the common good. 5. Unity: Each Eucharistic celebration symbolises a desire for unity among all baptised believers, a unity that remains incomplete but is actively pursued. 6. Celebration of the Word: If celebrating the Eucharist is impossible, the community can gather for the celebration of the Word, affirming Christ's presence even in the absence of the Eucharist. 7. The Eucharist and Synodality: The document links "synaxis" (Eucharistic assembly) with "synodos" (synodal assembly), emphasising Christ's promised presence wherever people gather in His name. 8. Role of the Holy Spirit: The Spirit ensures unity in both the Eucharistic and synodal gatherings, maintaining the Church's unity as the body of Christ. 9. Dialogue with God: Liturgy is a dialogue with God, where the community listens to His Word and responds, paralleling the discernment process in synodal gatherings. 10. Study Group: The document recommends establishing a Study Group to explore how liturgical celebrations can more fully express synodality, including reflection on preaching and catechetical resources.
<p>Sexuality</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pastoral Sensitivity: The Church is called to approach discussions on sexuality with empathy, respect, and pastoral sensitivity, recognising that people's experiences with sexuality are complex and deeply personal. 2. Dialogue and Accompaniment: Emphasis is placed on dialogue with individuals across a spectrum of sexual experiences, encouraging accompaniment and understanding rather than judgment. 3. Inclusion within the Community: The document acknowledges the need to include all members within the Church community, ensuring that those who feel marginalised because of their sexuality find a place within the Church. 4. Avoiding Exclusion: The Church seeks to avoid exclusionary practices, aiming instead to create a space where people can grow in their faith and feel accepted despite differences in their sexual orientation or identity. 5. Commitment to Compassionate Ministry: A compassionate approach to ministry concerning sexuality is encouraged, focusing on each person's unique journey and the Church's mission to offer guidance in a non-alienating manner.

<p>Women</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equal Dignity and Participation: It emphasises the equal dignity of women and men in the Church, recognising that women often encounter obstacles in realising their full potential in various roles, impacting the Church’s shared mission. 2. Historical and Contemporary Contributions: The report acknowledges the historical significance of women, such as Mary Magdalene and other figures, who played essential roles in early Christianity and were integral in spreading the faith 3. Roles in Modern Church Life: Women are recognised for their significant contributions today in various areas, such as theological research, leading community initiatives, and engaging in social justice efforts. They often serve as the primary witnesses to faith within families and communities. 4. Leadership and Canon Law: The document advocates for fully implementing leadership opportunities for women as already permitted by Canon Law, particularly in areas where women’s roles remain underutilised. It suggests there are no theological barriers to women taking on leadership responsibilities in the Church. 5. Ongoing Discernment on Diaconal Ministry: The document keeps open the discussion on the potential for women’s access to diaconal ministry, encouraging further discernment on this topic. 6. Inclusive Language: It calls for careful consideration of language and imagery in Church teaching and documents, promoting the inclusion of contributions from female saints, theologians, and mystics to ensure balanced representation.
<p>LGBTQ+</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pastoral Challenges: A recognition of the pastoral challenges in accompanying LGBTQ+ persons within the Church. 2. Dialogue: An emphasis on fostering dialogue and an understanding approach to LGBTQ+ individuals while upholding the Church’s doctrinal teachings. 3. Inclusion: The Church's commitment to walking with all members of the community, aiming to ensure LGBTQ+ persons feel included and valued in the Church. 4. Respectful Listening: A recommendation for respectful listening and pastoral sensitivity to LGBTQ+ people, acknowledging the importance of their dignity and unique experiences. 5. Engagement of Church Leaders: Encouragement for Church leaders to engage with LGBTQ+ issues through discernment and inclusive ministry practices, aiming to address the specific needs of this community while fostering communion in faith.
<p>Clergy</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Priests' Service and Proximity: Priests are called to live close to their communities, maintaining an approachable and welcoming presence. This entails listening attentively to people and adopting a synodal style in their ministry. 2. Collaboration with Bishops: Priests are encouraged to work collaboratively with their bishops, constituting a “presbyterium” that supports the local Church's unity and mission through shared discernment and pastoral care. 3. Support for Priests: There is an emphasis on the need for ongoing support, particularly for priests in their early ministry stages or during moments of

	<p>personal difficulty. This support should come from both the Church community and fellow clergy.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Exchange of Charisms: The presence of priests from religious orders, different cultural backgrounds, and Eastern Catholic Churches enriches local priesthood through diverse spiritual and pastoral charisms. This exchange of gifts fosters unity and inclusiveness in the Church's mission. 5. Role of Bishops: Bishops are called to serve in, with, and for their communities. Their ministry is defined by proclaiming the Word, presiding over sacraments, and being accessible to their faithful, fostering a deeper relational bond with their dioceses. 6. Synodal Election of Bishops: The document proposes that the faithful should have more involvement in the selection of bishops. Ideally, ordination should occur within the diocese the bishop will serve, enhancing his connection with the local Church. 7. Ongoing Formation for Bishops: Bishops are encouraged to pursue continuous formation and peer support, promoting fraternity and cooperation among neighbouring dioceses. This includes clarifying roles for auxiliary bishops and expanding their responsibilities.
<p>Belonging</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Modern Sense of Belonging: Belonging is increasingly defined by networks of relationships and dynamic cultural roots rather than strictly geographical terms. This change is driven largely by urbanisation and digital culture, which have reshaped traditional community bonds. 2. Challenges of Urbanisation: The document highlights that most of the global population now lives in cities, where individuals often experience isolation in large urban settings without historical or cultural roots. The Church aims to "rebuild community life" in such environments, encouraging meaningful connections and relationships. 3. Migration and Intercultural Belonging: Migration is noted as a significant factor affecting community and belonging within the Church, requiring pastoral approaches that respect diverse cultural and spiritual backgrounds while fostering intercultural communities. Maintaining connections for diaspora communities, particularly for Eastern Catholic Churches, is essential. 4. Digital Culture's Influence: Digital culture, especially among youth, has transformed experiences of belonging by reshaping communication and community formation. While it offers new opportunities, it also brings risks of loneliness and polarisation. The Church is encouraged to create supportive digital communities and foster a sense of belonging online. 5. Belonging in Local Communities: The Church is called to rethink "local" belonging, understanding it as the environment where human connections form and where the Church can express its mission, adapting to both the physical and relational dynamics of modern life. 6. Synodality and Belonging: The synodal approach emphasises collective discernment and community, reinforcing the concept of belonging through shared faith and dialogue across diverse perspectives within the Church community.

<p>Lay Ministry</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Historical Context: The Church has developed lay ministries alongside ordained ministries to meet community and mission needs. 2. Charisms as Ministries: Charisms, or spiritual gifts, are recognised as ministries when publicly acknowledged by the Church community and leadership, enabling stable and meaningful service. 3. Instituted Ministries: Key lay ministries are formally conferred by bishops through specific rites after a process of discernment and formation. This sacramental conferral redefines the person’s role in Church life and mission. 4. Specific Roles: In the Latin Church, the ministries of lector, acolyte, and catechist are established through Apostolic Letters, and Episcopal Conferences set criteria and formation paths for these ministries. 5. Non-Instituted Ministries: Some ministries, though not conferred by ritual, are exercised stably under Church authority. These include community coordination, leading prayers, and charitable organisation, adapting to local needs. 6. Extraordinary Ministries: Laypersons may serve in extraordinary capacities, like assisting at Baptisms or leading Sunday liturgies in the absence of priests. This practice is especially relevant in regions with fewer priests. 7. Spontaneous Services: There are also non-official ministries that allow all faithful to contribute to the mission through their talents and charisms without formal recognition 8. Participation and Responsibility: The Synod calls for increased lay involvement in Church decision-making, as well as in positions of responsibility across dioceses, seminaries, and theological institutions. 9. Supporting Consecrated Life: There’s an emphasis on recognising the contributions of consecrated men and women, supporting their roles in ecclesial responsibilities. 10. Judicial Roles: The Synod advocates for more qualified laypeople serving as judges in canonical processes. 11. Mission of the Baptised: All baptised are called to embody Gospel values in society. Lay ministry is seen as a vehicle for this mission, with creative and courageous responses encouraged by Pope Francis. 12. Encouraging Lay Ministries: The Church encourages the growth of lay ministries that do not require ordination, allowing flexible ministerial roles within and beyond liturgical functions.
<p>Co-Responsibility</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusivity of All Members: Co-responsibility encourages the active participation of all baptised individuals, recognising diverse apostolic capacities and ensuring that everyone, regardless of their abilities or vocations, contributes to the mission. 2. Recognition of Diverse Vocations: Various vocations, such as those of married individuals and consecrated life, are celebrated, and each is recognised as having a unique role in contributing to the life and mission of the Church. 3. Authority and Participation: The document advocates for a decision-making process that includes consultation and discernment, aiming for decisions that reflect the shared obedience to God’s will and ensuring the contributions of the laity are respected.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Structures for Synodal Living: Institutional structures, both at local and universal Church levels, should be created or reformed to foster a more synodal and collaborative approach. This means encouraging processes that balance consultation with the final decision-making authority held by the Church hierarchy. 5. Legal Frameworks for Co-Responsibility: The document suggests revisions to Canon Law to clarify the consultative and deliberative roles in Church decision-making processes, minimising ambiguity and fostering mutual respect between authorities and community members. 6. Decision Implementation: The co-responsible approach includes a commitment to implement decisions collectively and to involve participants in evaluation processes, underscoring a culture of accountability.
Abuse	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acknowledging Abuse: Acknowledging the various forms of abuse within the Church, such as sexual, spiritual, economic, and institutional abuse, as well as the misuse of power and conscience by clergy and those in ecclesial roles. 2. Listening: Emphasising the need for the Church to listen attentively and compassionately to the voices of abuse survivors to foster healing and reconciliation. 3. Restoring Trust: Advocating for accountability and transparency to restore trust, particularly in cases of abuse involving minors and vulnerable adults. 4. Prevention: Recognising that the Church must not only respond to abuse but also create proactive structures that prevent such harm and protect all individuals. 5. Dangers of Clericalism: Condemning clericalism as a significant factor that perpetuates abuse by placing certain clergy members above accountability, thus separating them from the rest of the community. 6. Financial and Other Forms of Abuse: Stressing that transparency and accountability practices must extend beyond sexual abuse cases to include financial and other forms of abuse. 7. Change in Practice: Calling for a fundamental shift in pastoral and ecclesial practices to reflect justice, transparency, and respect for the dignity and rights of individuals within the Church community.
Ecumenism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foundation in Baptism: Baptism is seen as the basis for ecumenism, creating a shared identity among Christians that transcends denominational boundaries. This shared identity also underpins synodality, aligning ecumenism and the synodal path. 2. Synodality as an Ecumenical Path: The report emphasises that the Catholic Church's synodal journey must inherently be ecumenical, fostering unity and inclusiveness with other Christian traditions. 3. Spiritual Renewal and Reconciliation: True ecumenism requires spiritual renewal, including repentance, healing of past wounds, and fraternal correction conducted in a spirit of evangelical charity. This approach emphasises relationships and understanding over doctrinal disputes. 4. Ecumenism of Blood: In some regions, Christians of various denominations face persecution and martyrdom together, embodying an "ecumenism of blood." This shared sacrifice is viewed as a powerful testament to unity through faith in Christ

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Mutual Enrichment through Tradition: The report calls for respect and appreciation for the theological, spiritual, and liturgical diversity within the Catholic Church, seeing this diversity as a way to strengthen and enrich ecumenical relations. 6. Commitment to Ecumenical Progress: The report reaffirms the Catholic Church's commitment to advancing ecumenical relations, celebrating progress over the past sixty years and the contributions of fraternal delegates. It encourages the incorporation of ecumenical insights into ecclesial practices. 7. Dialogue with Non-Christian Faiths: Ecumenism extends to interfaith dialogue, promoting friendship, peace, and shared moral values. The Synod encourages Christians to engage positively with those of other faiths, especially in areas where religious harmony can improve social conditions.
Baptism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prophetic Role: Baptism grants the "holy People of God" a share in Christ's prophetic role, fostering a life of faith and charity that serves as a witness to others. 2. Sensus Fidei: Through baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, believers develop the "sensus fidei," an intuitive grasp of gospel truths. This sense enables the faithful to resonate with divine realities, fostering unity in understanding core aspects of faith and morals. 3. Consensus Fidelium: Baptismal unity aids the Church in discerning collective beliefs, forming a consensus fidelium—consensus among the faithful—which validates the doctrines and practices aligned with apostolic faith. 4. Basis for Synodality and Ecumenism: Baptism is presented as the foundation for both synodality and ecumenism, marking the shared spiritual journey of all Christians and forming a basis for unity across denominations. 5. Call for Spiritual Renewal: Ecumenism, rooted in baptism, requires spiritual renewal, including repentance, healing of past wounds, and fraternal correction within a spirit of evangelical charity. 6. Christian Initiation: Baptism is part of the broader Christian initiation, drawing believers into Paschal faith and the Trinitarian communion. This journey shapes ecclesial identity and fosters a collective understanding of diverse vocations and ministries. 7. First Form of Synodality: In practice, baptismal initiation in the Church often represents the initial experience of synodality, as the community engages with and supports individuals' spiritual growth and formation.
Faith Formation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comprehensive and Ongoing Formation: The document underlines the need for ongoing faith formation, which goes beyond theoretical knowledge to foster practical skills in dialogue, encounter, and collaboration. 2. Communal and Inclusive Learning: Formation should involve people from various backgrounds—laypeople, consecrated individuals, and ordained ministers—working together to build mutual understanding and cooperation. 3. Contribution of All Members: Formation is seen as a reciprocal process, where each participant, regardless of role, has something to offer and learn from others. It calls for a communal approach to learning and growing in faith. 4. Formative Environments: Faith formation is encouraged within various Church settings such as schools, small groups, parishes, and missionary

	<p>activities. These settings create opportunities for multigenerational and community-based discipleship.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Focus on Synodality and Dialogue: Emphasising catechesis that is outward-looking, formation should foster synodality—cooperation, mutual support, and engagement with those on the peripheries. Catechesis is envisioned as a dialogue that addresses contemporary existential questions and seeks to be inclusive of diverse experiences. 6. Digital Awareness: The formation process also addresses digital culture, advocating for the Church’s message to be shared online responsibly and without distortion, while cautioning against the challenges of digital culture, like misinformation and exploitation. 7. Formation of Church Leaders: Particular emphasis is given to the formation of clergy, with a call for guidelines that incorporate synodality and ecumenical awareness. The training of bishops and priests should prepare them for roles that promote unity and inclusive decision-making within the Church.
<p>Culture</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unity in Diversity: The Church values the diversity of cultures in which it is rooted. The synodal journey emphasised that the People of God, drawn from various cultural contexts, contribute to the Church’s unity, enriching it with diverse experiences. 2. Intercultural Exchange: The document stresses the importance of intercultural exchange and mutual understanding, seeing this as essential for building communion and appreciating the unique contributions of local Churches. 3. Recognition of Local Contexts: The synodal process fostered appreciation for local contexts as places where God’s universal call manifests uniquely. This recognition enables different cultures to grasp their unity within diversity, thus encouraging an exchange of gifts across cultures. 4. Church as a Mosaic of Cultures: By existing in various cultural environments, the Church is seen as a mosaic of peoples and traditions. This plurality is an integral part of the Church's catholicity, signifying unity that allows diverse cultural expressions within the Church. 5. Evangelisation Respecting Culture: Evangelisation is encouraged to respect cultural diversity. Different ways of expressing the message of salvation should be welcomed, as this approach prevents reducing the Gospel to a single cultural or theological form 6. Dialogue with Other Religions and Societies: The Church’s engagement with people from various religious and cultural backgrounds emphasises friendship, peace, and shared values. This is viewed as a call to establish harmonious relationships and mutual enrichment through cultural dialogue. 7. Cultural Self-Examination: The document encourages confronting cultural biases and prejudices that may hinder openness. It views each culture’s unique perspective as a potential enrichment for the Church and underscores the necessity of mutual respect and humility in intercultural relations.

Appendix 3: Prayer Resources for Session in Spring 2025

Prayer and spirituality lie at the heart of any synodal process, it is more than a method - it is a spiritual journey that fosters unity and co-creation of a Church rooted in Christ's mission. During the past three years the Holy Spirit has called each of us to deep conversion—not just structural change, but transformation that touches our relationships and daily lives. Synodal spirituality blends prayer, community and mission, it urges us to live out our baptismal calling more fully. At the core of this spirituality lies Jesus and individual and collective relationships with Him and his loving heart. The way we participate in the life of our communities and how we share the Gospel message in the concreteness of our communities reflect the very essence of God's love.

1. PRAYER RESOURCES FOR USE IN THE SPRING GATHERINGS

CHRIST IS ALIVE PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, we know you are alive.
You are our hope
and in a wonderful way you bring freshness to our world
and everything you touch becomes young.

You are in us, you are with us
and you never abandon us.

We ask you now to restore our strength and hope
As we journey together as people of faith,
You who live and reign forever.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE: ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS, 5:1-5

So then, now that we have been justified by faith,
we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;

It is through him, by faith,
that we have been admitted into God's favour in which we are living
and look forward exultantly to God's glory.

Not only that; let us exult, too, in our hardships,
understanding that hardship develops perseverance,
and perseverance develops a tested character,
something that gives us hope,
and a hope which will not let us down,
because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit
which has been given to us.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

FINAL PRAYER: A LITANY OF HOPE

Hope is the power by which we firmly and constantly
long for what we were placed on earth to do

Fill our hearts with hope

Hope is trusting in what God has promised us

Fill our hearts with hope

Hope encourages us and sustains us on our journey of faith

Fill our hearts with hope

Hope energises us with the power of love

Fill our hearts with hope

Hope is sure and steadfast, anchoring us in God

Fill our hearts with hope

Hope is joy even in times of trial

Fill our hearts with hope

Hope is Jesus Christ and his promises

Fill our hearts with hope

Appendix 4: Themes Summary Document

This should be given to participants in the session for reference during Conversations in the Spirit.

Baptism

Baptism is the foundation of our faith journey, connecting us to Christ and one another. It's also a call to participation, communion, and shared mission. Through baptism we each receive our vocation in life from God. In baptism, we are united in the Spirit, forming a community that supports each member in their faith journey.

Catechesis

Catechesis should integrate faith formation with a deeper understanding of liturgical and spiritual experiences, enabling believers to connect their faith with their daily lives. The language and imagery used must ensure that it is inclusive and resonate with various groups within the Church. Catechesis should be closely tied to the liturgical life of the Church, ensuring that preaching and liturgical celebrations offer opportunities for faith formation. Its role in nurturing the faith of children is essential.

Education

Catholic schools play a vital role in shaping young people. They teach values, build character, and often serve as the first connection that many have with the Church. They're also spaces for dialogue between different cultures and religions. Teachers must be well-prepared to guide students both intellectually and spiritually. Catholic education strives to balance modern needs with faith and holistic development.

Faith Formation

Faith formation is about more than knowledge – it is about building skills for mission, dialogue, collaboration, and connection. It's a shared journey where laypeople, clergy, and consecrated individuals grow and learn together. The focus should be on creating welcoming spaces that foster faith, address today's challenges, and encourage responsible digital engagement to broaden the reach of evangelisation.

Youth

Young people are essential to the Church's future. Their energy and values – like care for the environment, justice, and inclusivity – can help create a more vibrant, welcoming Church. The Church must walk alongside them, offering guidance through education, prayer, and service. Proposals from the 2018 “Synod on Young People” should be revisited to encourage their active involvement and strengthen their role in the Church's mission.

Liturgy

The Sunday Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life. It's where the community gathers, unites, and lives out its mission. This sacred celebration embraces diversity while maintaining unity, bringing together different traditions and roles. Liturgy and the synodal journey are deeply connected, both centred on Christ and guided by the Spirit. As a church we must explore ways to make liturgical celebrations even more engaging and inclusive.

Women

Women and men have equal dignity in the Church, and historically women have played crucial roles in the transmission of the faith, and they continue to do so today in families, communities, and theology. The Church could offer women more leadership opportunities and promote more vigorously the formal ministerial roles such as lector, acolyte and catechist to deepen the role of women in the liturgical and administrative life of the faith community. Using inclusive language and recognising women's contributions will enrich the Church and its mission.

Clergy

Priests and bishops have a special role in building a collaborative Church. They are called to stay connected to their communities, listen actively, and work together in a spirit of unity. Supporting clergy is essential, especially during challenges. Priests from diverse backgrounds bring richness to the Church, promoting inclusivity and unity. Bishops, too, must be accessible, fostering trust and collaboration in their leadership.

Lay Ministry

Lay ministries – ministerial roles for non-ordained people – are growing to meet the Church’s needs. Whether it’s leading prayers, assisting with sacraments, or serving the community, lay ministers play an important role. The Synod encourages greater lay involvement in leadership and decision-making. These roles bring creativity and courage to the Church’s mission.

Co-Responsibility

Co-responsibility means everyone in the Church shares in its mission. Each person – whether lay, ordained, or consecrated – has unique gifts to offer. The Church must foster collaboration by including more voices in decision-making while respecting Church authority. This approach creates a more open, transparent, and mission-focused Church.

Abuse

Addressing abuse in all its forms is vital for healing and trust. The Church must listen compassionately to survivors and commit to transparency and accountability. Preventing abuse requires systemic change, including tackling clericalism. Justice, respect, and protection must guide all Church practices moving forward.

Sexuality and LGBTQ+ Issues

The Church is called to approach issues of sexuality with empathy and respect. It must welcome all people, regardless of sexual orientation or identity, and ensure they feel valued and included while staying true to its teaching and values. Listening, dialogue, and compassion are essential to creating a supportive Church community. This reflects the Church’s commitment to inclusion and pastoral care.

Culture

The Church celebrates cultural diversity, seeing it as a source of enrichment. Every culture offers unique perspectives that contribute to the Church’s shared mission. Evangelisation respects and incorporates these differences, promoting friendship, peace, and shared values through cultural dialogue.

Belonging

Many people in today’s world feel isolated, especially in urban areas, so the Church must work to rebuild a sense of community. Digital spaces offer opportunities for connection, but they also bring risks like loneliness, and anxiety. The Church can foster belonging by creating meaningful connections both online and in person.

Family

Families are the “domestic Church,” where values like love, trust, and forgiveness are learned. They play a key role in shaping future generations of faith and creating a strong Church community. They are central to the Church’s mission and its life.

Ecumenism

Baptism connects us to other Christians, fostering unity across denominations. Ecumenism – the effort to promote Christian unity – calls for dialogue, healing, and shared purpose. This journey isn’t just about doctrine but about relationships and mutual understanding, strengthening bonds between traditions and faiths.

Covid-19

The final report from the Synod acknowledges Covid-19 as a factor that has impacted people and communities, adding layers of difficulty to social, economic, and emotional aspects of life. The experience of Covid-19 serves as a reminder of shared vulnerability and the need for compassion, underscoring a collective journey toward healing and unity within the Church and the global community.

Appendix 5: Conversation in the Spirit Guide and Questions

Conversation in the Spirit concerns the quality of one's capacity to listen as well as the quality of the words spoken. It is about paying attention to the spiritual movements both in oneself and in the other participants. Such a quality of attention is an act of reverence and hospitality for oneself and for others. Conversation in the Spirit creates an atmosphere of trust and welcome which allows all parties to express themselves freely. It invites them to pay attention to a particular theme and to seriously consider whatever is going on within the heart and mind of each participant. This requires being attentive to more than simply the words expressed.

This quality of attention is in itself an act of respecting, welcoming, and being hospitable to others as they are. It is an approach that takes seriously what happens in the hearts of those who are conversing. There are two necessary attitudes that are fundamental to this process: **active listening, speaking from the heart with a fundamental stance of hope.**

It is important to keep in mind what is happening in the other person and in me. Ask how the Lord is working in everyone and in the situation the group gathered find themselves in.

First Round:

Question: Which themes are emerging for you as we continue to journey together?

Each person takes turns to share. Everyone is given the same amount of time to speak (e.g. 3 minutes). Listen to one another rather than thinking about what you want to say. Open your hearts and minds to listen to the one who is speaking and be attentive to how the Holy Spirit is moving.

Between each person, take a brief pause to absorb and honour what was said.

During this round there are no discussions or interactions between participants except to ask for clarification about a word or phrase if necessary.

A time of silence is observed. Pay attention to how you have been moved during the first round. What struck you as you listened, and what were the notable points of consolation or desolation if any?

Round Two:

Question: What is staying with you from round one, what is challenging you and what is resonating with you?

Share what emerged within you during the time of silence. This is not a time for discussing or refuting what someone else says, nor for bringing up something you forgot to mention in the first round. It is an opportunity to respond to questions like:

- *What moved me in what I heard?*
- *What resonates with me?*
- *What challenges me?*
- *What insights have I received?*
- *Where was there a sense of harmony with others as we shared?*

A time of silence is once again observed.

Third Round:

Question: In light of what we have heard this evening, what are the priorities that the Holy Spirit is prompting us to recommend to the Pre synodal assembly on 18 October 2025?

Share what emerged from the preceding time of silence. Take note of the ways in which the Holy Spirit may be moving in the group. Briefly review and reflect on how the conversation proceeded.

Decide on the main points you will report from the conversation to the whole gathering.

- **Submissions to the National Synodal Team must be made by 1st May 2025**
- **Once completed, the form will be automatically sent to the National Synodal Office for collation.**
- **Please retain a copy of your submission for Diocesan / Ecclesial Movement / Group records and pastoral reflection.**