



**With the Blessed Virgin Mary towards the
16th Ordinary General Assembly of
the Synod of Bishops
Synod for a Synodal Church 2021-2024**

LITURGICAL RESOURCES



Mary, the mother of God, is always with us on the synodal path, for she is also 'Mother of the Church' (Mater Ecclesiae); mother of all those who are companions and disciples of her son. Whenever we are feeling lost, confused, or hesitant about the way, we only have to look to her to point out the way. Mary does not speak. She does not need to. She only needs to direct our gaze to her son. In her wordless gesture, she sums up the whole mission of the Church. Even when the People of God are 'in via'—on the journey—they are always in mission. The two cannot be separated, for there is but one way and one object of our desire, one source of our life and our hope: Jesus Christ. (Towards a spirituality for synodality, p.45)

Part I:

Procession: Walking Together With Mary Towards Synodal Church

In the Gospel of Luke, upon learning of her miraculous conception of Jesus, Mary embarked on a journey to visit Elizabeth, who was also pregnant with John the Baptist. Mary's willingness to undertake this journey can be seen as an act of solidarity and companionship, as she sought to support and share in Elizabeth's joy during her own miraculous pregnancy. The Visitation can be seen as a procession towards the church in a metaphorical sense. Mary, bearing the presence of Christ within her, represents the Church itself, moving toward Elizabeth, who symbolizes the faithful community awaiting the arrival of the Messiah. In this context, Mary's physical journey becomes a powerful symbol of the Church's mission to bring Christ's presence to others and to unite believers in fellowship and mutual support. As Mary approaches Elizabeth, their encounter becomes a beautiful expression of synodality. The two women greet each other with joy, recognizing and affirming the divine work happening within them. Their encounter transcends the boundaries of their individual experiences, bringing together the hopes, dreams, and promises of their respective pregnancies. Their shared faith and mutual support exemplify the essence of synodality, where believers come together in unity, celebrating and uplifting one another on their spiritual journeys. The Visitation also highlights the significance of listening and discernment within synodality. As Mary and Elizabeth engage in conversation, Mary humbly listens to Elizabeth's prophetic words, acknowledging the significance of her relative's faith and role in God's plan. This interplay of dialogue and attentive listening underscores the importance of mutual respect and collaboration within the faith community, as individuals contribute their unique perspectives and insights for the greater good.

Mary's journey to visit Elizabeth serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative power of unity, shared joy, support, and the collaborative spirit that lies at the heart of synodality. It inspires believers to emulate this model of mutual care and companionship as they walk together on their own faith journeys towards the church, fostering a vibrant and inclusive faith community.

Recommendations during the Procession:

- A statue of Our Lady could be carried in procession around the Shrine/Minor Basilica, or along the streets.
- People could come from different streets then would walk together towards the Church.
- The Logo of the Synod could be displayed on a banner during the procession.
- The congregation shall participate with handkerchiefs or lighted candles.

Part II: **Catechesis on Synodality**

The Catechesis on synodality on the Feast of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth holds great significance as we prepare on the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. The Visitation is a pivotal event in the life of Mary, where she, after receiving the news of her own miraculous conception, journeys to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who is also experiencing a miraculous pregnancy with John the Baptist. This encounter between Mary and Elizabeth carries profound lessons about community, mutual support, and collaboration, which are fundamental aspects of synodality.

A 15-minute material will be provided by the International Shrine of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage and shall be sent to the shrine/basilica's respective email addresses.

Part III: **Holy Rosary for the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops**

Model of the Praying of the Rosary

- I. After the Sign of the Cross, a **SHORT INTRODUCTION** follows:

"Today, on the Feast of the Visitation, on the last day of the month dedicated to Mary, as 'Pueblo Amante de Maria,' we have gathered here for a special purpose. Our Holy Father has invited every one of us to seek the accompanying and interceding presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and Mother of the Church today.

As we pray the Joyful Mysteries of the Holy Rosary, we shall pray for the universal Church, as it enters the last and the final phase of the Synod for a Synodal Church 2021 – 2024. May our Holy Father, Synod Secretariat, the preparation committees, the organizers, the invitees, and the media may be blessed with the Spirit of discernment and enlightenment. And, we shall pray that communion, participation, and mission be rediscovered in the Universal Church and in all local churches. May we learn to strengthen our communion, deepen our participation, and enlarge our mission. And, we shall pray for our Diocese, the local church, that the discussions we had for the Diocesan and the Continental Phases may be put into practice, and fruits of synodality be reaped

in every ecclesial reality. May we be generous and magnanimous in accommodating and accompanying everyone on the synodal journey."

II. Praying of the Holy Rosary reflecting on the **Joyful Mysteries**

Intentions for each Mystery:

1. *First Mystery:* We pray for your abundant blessings and guidance upon Synod Fathers, Church leaders, priests, and consecrated men and women that through the synodality, they may humbly discern your will, lead with love and integrity, and inspire others through their selfless service.
2. *Second Mystery:* We pray for your divine wisdom and grace upon government officials and all those serving the common good, that through synodality, they may govern with justice, compassion, and integrity, working tirelessly to uplift and protect the well-being of all people.
3. *Third Mystery:* We lift up our prayers for the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalized in society, through synodality, all people of goodwill may heed their cries, embrace their dignity, and work together to create a more just and inclusive society where all are valued and empowered.
4. *Fourth Mystery:* We pray for the laity and the entire people of God, united in the spirit of synodality, that we may actively participate in the life and mission of the Church, sharing our unique gifts, insights, and experiences, and together discerning your will, so that we may bear witness to your love and bring about the transformation of the world according to your divine plan.
5. *Fifth Mystery:* We lift our hearts in prayer for the young people, the present and future of the Church, that they may be embraced and empowered within the spirit of synodality, as their voices, gifts, and dreams are vital in shaping the Church's mission and leading us towards a vibrant and hope-filled future rooted in your love and truth.

III. After the Salve Regina, pray the INVOCATION TO MARY FOR ACCOMPANYING US ON THE SYNODAL JOURNEY

INVOCATION TO MARY FOR ACCOMPANYING US ON THE SYNODAL JOURNEY

O Mother of the Church, Mother of God,
As we enter the final phase of the Synod for a Synodal Church,
We ask that you may journey with us.

You were grace-filled and God-with (cf. Lk 1:28). May our Pope Francis, the Synod Fathers and Mothers, Brothers and Sisters be filled with grace, and through their interactions may they proclaim that God is with us, Emmanuel.

You dialogued with Archangel Gabriel (cf. Lk 1:34), not out of doubt, but out of wonder. May our dialogues with one another be propelled by sense of wonder and admiration for the other.

You were overshadowed by the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1:35). May the entire synodal event be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life and truth, peace and consolation.

You surrendered to God (cf. Lk 1:38) hearing from the Archangel Gabriel that 'nothing is impossible for God.' Give us humility to surrender to the God who makes everything possible. May our human pride does not hinder our journey towards each other.

When you visited Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:39-45) and remained with her, you celebrated her presence, you celebrated the other. May we celebrate the presence of each other in the Church, and the society.

You magnified the Lord (cf. Lk 1:46-55). Your heart was always towards the heavens. May our minds and hearts be raised towards the highest, that we may proclaim to the world the wonders that the Almighty has worked in our lives – in the Universal Church, and through the local churches.

May your silence (cf. Mt 1-2; Lk 1-2) teach us to let go of our entitlement, fear, rigidity, clash of wills, and ego.

You pondered everything in your heart (Lk 2:19; 2:51). Whatever we have heard from each other, whatever that has occurred to us in the process of synodal discussions may we ponder. We shall ponder on the things that are not clear to us, or that disturb us, or that pull us apart.

You were blessed by the elders Simeon and Anna at the Temple (cf. Lk 2:34). May we be blessed by the wisdom of the Fathers of the Church, both ancient and modern.

At the wedding at Cana you identified the need of the family (cf. Jn 2:1-11). May we identify the needs of the vulnerable and the fragile – the downtrodden, the rejected, the women, the children, the young men and women, the silenced, the war-victims, the victims of various abuses, the migrants, the cry of our common home – and may be inspired to act for the betterment of the other, that we may work to keep the good wine till the end.

At the Cross, when your Son handed you over to the beloved disciple (cf. Jn 19:25-27), you embraced helplessness, vulnerability, and uncertainty. May we accept and own that we are helpless, vulnerable, and uncertain.

You were present in prayer in the upper room with other apostles (cf. Ac 1:13-14), praying for the Church and the world. May you pray for us now that we too may experience a new Pentecost during the synod. And may we continue to bear fruits in communion, with participation, and for mission.

Amen.

Part IV:

Holy Mass for the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

White

Feast

First Reading: Zephaniah 3: 14-18a or Romans 12: 9-16

Responsorial Psalm: Isaiah 12: 2-3, 4bcd, 5-6

Alleluia: Luke 1: 45

Gospel: Luke 1: 39-56

At the end of the Mass, the Candles or flowers may be offered to Our Lady.

Suggested Introduction for the Holy Mass:

Today, we gather in celebration of the Holy Mass on the feast of the Visitation, a day when we commemorate the momentous meeting between the Blessed Virgin Mary and her cousin Elizabeth. As we reflect on this encounter, we are reminded of the power of the Holy Spirit and the transformative effect it has on those who welcome it into their lives.

This year, we approach the feast of the Visitation with a special focus on the upcoming 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which will be centered on the theme of synodality. The Synod on Synodality aims to explore the ways in which the Catholic Church can better engage with its members and encourage greater participation in the life and mission of the Church.

As we come together in prayer today, let us turn to the Blessed Virgin Mary as our guide and inspiration. Mary's humility, obedience, and unwavering faith in God's plan serve as a model for all of us as we seek to discern the will of God and live out our callings as members of the Church.

May our celebration of the Holy Mass on this feast of the Visitation deepen our understanding of synodality and inspire us to work together with one heart and one mind in service of the Gospel. Let us join our voices in prayer, asking the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, as we seek to discern God's will for the Church and the world.

Reflection Guide on the Significance of the Day

Mary and We on the Synodal Journey - Traveling, Greeting, Proclaiming

The gospel reading of the day (Lk 1:39-56) brings before us the picture of Mary who is traveling, greeting, and proclaiming. The overwhelming picture of Mary is that she is in haste at the beginning of the gospel, and at rest at the end – remains with Elizabeth for three months.

Luke presents the event with three pairs of verbs: (i) Arising and going; (ii) Entering and greeting; and (iii) Remaining and returning.

i. Mary arose and went (Communion)

As soon as the angel Gabriel leaves the house, “Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth” (Lk 1:39). The event is described as visitation. It is much more than a simple visit. In the visitation both the persons undergo a dramatic transformation, but in a visit no such transformation is intended. The visits may not be purposeful, but the visitation is. What was the purpose of Mary’s visitation to Elizabeth? Was it to verify what the angel had said to her - “And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren” (Lk 1:36)? Or was it to serve Elizabeth in her time of need, as often interpreted by the preachers? The purpose of Mary’s journey to meet her relative Elizabeth is not explicitly given in the Gospel. However, from Lk 1:56 we can deduce that Mary’s purpose was to ‘dwell’ or to ‘remain’ there (in Greek, *menō*). The same verb is used in Jn 1:39, where Jesus invites his first disciples “to come and see.” To dwell or to remain signifies that one is in the presence of the other. Mary chose to be in Elizabeth’s presence.

The visitation of Mary occurs in three stages: first, Mary listens to the words of God through Gabriel; second, discernment. She chooses to go to meet Elizabeth; and third, action. Mary visits Elizabeth. These three stages are important in our encounter with the other: first, our movement towards the other is based on our movement towards God; second, in every moment of our encounter with the other we discern and make a choice; and third, we meet the other. In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis warns that “fear deprives us of the desire and the ability to encounter the other.”

The verbs ‘arising’ and ‘going’ refer to ‘communion’ in the synodal journey. In Lk 15:18, the younger son, who is far from home, says to himself, “I will arise and go to my father.” And he arose and went. As a result, communion was restored with his father. The synodal journey invites us to arise and to go towards God. For, only when we realize our rootedness in the Merciful God, we can open ourselves to one another. Then, we arise and go towards each other – not those whom we know in the parish or the diocese, not to the familiar ones, but to the unfamiliar, the real other – other Christian, other neighboring religious brother or sister, other atheist, and every other. To arise and to go we need to shed our own baggage of fear, prejudice, and indifference.

ii. *Mary entered and greeted* (Participation)

Though Mary starts her journey in haste, she does not enter the house of Zechariah in haste. Luke describes Mary’s two distinct actions: she entered, and she greeted. To enter someone’s house we need permission, we need a welcome, and we need someone to open the door for us. The process implies silence, and patience. Mary is silent and patient at the door of Zechariah. This is a breathing-pause for Mary. In the silence of her heart, she

recalls to herself all that happened to her. She is the Mother of the Messiah. That is the call or the vocation that she has received now. She experiences in herself the vibrations of the Holy Spirit as she hears the latch being opened from the other side. There she finds Elizabeth. Mary greets Elizabeth. Luke does not say with what words or gestures Mary greeted Elizabeth. But, from the cultural background we could deduce that Mary might have said a 'shalom' to Elizabeth, or might have just hugged and kissed her. The vibrations of the Holy Spirit pass from Mary to Elizabeth.

The actions of 'entering' and 'greeting' refer to 'participation'. Participation means that we 'enter' into a structure or a system, with our gifts and charisms, blessings and benevolence. And we pass the same to others by greeting – by appreciating their gifts and charisms, blessings and benevolence.

iii. *Mary remained and returned* (Mission)

"And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home," thus concludes the evangelist. To remain with someone means to establish a lasting relationship with the other. The first disciples, upon the invitation of the Lord to come and see, go and remain with him. They remain with him so that they may be able to see who Jesus is and what he does (cf. Jn 1:35-39). The apostles are chosen that they may remain with Jesus (cf. Mk 3:14). Jesus invites his disciples to remain with him: "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" (Jn 15:4). Mary remains at the service of Elizabeth. Then, Mary returns her home. To resume her works at home.

As the Synodal church, when we are in mission, we are at the service of others; being available to them, showing our values and priorities; partaking in their vulnerabilities and sharing their uncertainties. And at the end of our mission, we return home. We return to ourselves with memories to cherish; we return to review and restore ourselves. Mission is in fact going forth and coming back.

At the core of the visitation narrative is the Magnificat, Mary's proclamation of God's wonders. After being greeted by Elizabeth, Mary does not greet her back. She raises the greetings to God in the form of the Magnificat. Mary, who was propelled by God to visit Elizabeth, concludes with her praises to God. Mary's heart bursts out with great joy and praises God. She does not speak about herself but exclusively about God's merciful intervention in her life and in the life of Israel.

In the Magnificat, Mary remembers not only the good things that God did in her life (vv. 46-49) but also in the life of humanity (vv. 50-53). In the concluding part (vv. 54-55), she

speaks about how God has blessed the people of Israel with His mercy. There are two reasons for Mary's praise: 1. God has had regard for the lowliness of his handmaid; 2. The Mighty One has done great things for her and for the people of Israel.

In the Liturgy of the Hours, the Church proclaims this Canticle during the celebration of Vespers every day. The Church considers this hymn as one of the most important and most Significant Canticles of the Second Testament. The Church praises God along with Mary, proclaiming her own words.

In the synodal Church, this communitarian aspect is very important. It is as an assembly that we praise God. We all are part of the mystical body of Christ. As the Synodal Church, we need to worship God and praise Him as one family. It is not only in our worship, but it should also be manifested in our day-to-day living together as the people of God united in love.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Let us now offer our prayers and petitions to God, our loving Father, as we celebrate the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Today, we join with Mary on her journey towards the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, asking for her intercession and guidance. As a Synodal Church, let us pray for the needs of the Church and the world, responding:

Lord, may we walk together towards You like Mary.

For the Holy Church, that as we prepare for the Synod of Bishops, we may be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and guided by the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who humbly and obediently said "yes" to God's plan, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, may we walk together towards You like Mary.

For Pope Francis, the bishops, and all leaders in the Church, that they may be inspired by the Holy Spirit to lead with wisdom and compassion during the Synod, and that they may work tirelessly to build a Synodal Church that listens, discerns, and accompanies the People of God, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, may we walk together towards You like Mary.

For all participants in the Synod of Bishops, that they may bring diverse perspectives, rich experiences, and profound faith to the discussions and discernment, so that together, they may discern God's will for the Church, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, may we walk together towards You like Mary.

For the unity and communion of the Church, that the Synodal process may foster a deeper sense of collaboration, dialogue, and mutual respect among all members of the Church, and that it may bear abundant fruits of renewal and evangelization, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, may we walk together towards You like Mary.

For the challenges and concerns facing the Church and the world today, that the Synod of Bishops may address issues such as social justice, care for the environment, family life, youth engagement, and the dignity of every human person with wisdom, compassion, and courage, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, may we walk together towards You like Mary.

For those who are suffering or experiencing difficulties in their lives, that through the intercession of Mary, they may find comfort, strength, and hope in their trials, and that the Synod may address the needs of the marginalized and vulnerable in society, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, may we walk together towards You like Mary.

For all families, that they may be inspired by the example of the Holy Family and be places of love, support, and faith formation, and that the Synodal Church may offer guidance and pastoral care to families in their joys and challenges, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, may we walk together towards You like Mary.

For an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church, that as we journey together towards the Synod of Bishops, we may be renewed in our commitment to Christ, empowered to witness to the Gospel, and filled with a renewed zeal for building God's Kingdom on earth, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, may we walk together towards You like Mary.

Loving Father, as we offer these prayers and petitions, we trust in your providence and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Help us to embrace the Synodal journey with faith and hope, knowing that you are with us every step of the way. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYER FOR SYNOD ON SYNODALITY (to be prayed after Prayer after Communion)

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.