

# Questionnaire for a Synodal Parish

## “All together, following Christ”

### INTRODUCTION

"The parish is the community of faithful that realizes the mystery of the Church in a visible, immediate, and daily form. The parish is the place where one learns to live as disciples of the Lord within a network of fraternal relations in which one experiences communion in the diversity of vocations and generations, charisms, ministries, and skills, forming a concrete community that lives its mission and service in solidarity, in the harmony of each member's specific contribution."<sup>1</sup>

How are we living synodality in our parish today? The objective of this proposed questionnaire is to help you discern this subject together. A synodality to be lived together, each according to their gifts, talents, and availability. Together, because the body needs all its members to function well. Together, because each of us is unique in God's eyes, and this uniqueness is a wealth for others. Together, because the call to mission concerns us all. Together, we can serve a greater number and mobilize for more causes. Together, our vigilance will be higher, and we will be better able to prevent drifts and abuses. Together, we will be stronger and can truly radiate the breath of the Spirit.

We invite you to experience this questionnaire as a team, with a representation that is as wide as possible (priests, engaged laity, people of different sensibilities and ages). It can be valuable to start with a time of prayer to listen together to what the Spirit wants for your community. Take the time to answer the questions with simplicity and truth, without judging yourselves, but seeking to discern. The objective is not to get a "good grade," but to reveal points of support and calls to progress. At the end of this review, choose together two or three concrete projects to implement during the year, so that synodality becomes an ever more living reality in your parish.

---

<sup>1</sup> International Theological Commission – Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church, 2018

## Theme 1: Status of the Current Situation

### How are our reflections and proposals constructed?

*"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the good of all." (1 Cor 12:7)*

Synodality begins with an attitude of listening: listening to the Holy Spirit, listening to the Word of God, and listening to one another. The Final Document of the Synod recalls that ecclesial discernment is not an organizational technique but a spiritual practice lived in faith. Examining our spaces for dialogue and our ways of reflecting together allows us to see whether we are truly walking together, in trust and co-responsibility. It is about considering whether our practices already manifest a Church that listens before deciding.

---

- **What are the regular consultation places that can help us discern?**
  - (e.g., Pastoral Council, Economic Council, Parish Animation Team).
  
- **How do these consultation places function?**
  - What is the frequency of meetings?
  - How are members appointed: consultation, decision by the priest, or vote?
  - Does it happen that the priest accepts a decision made by the body that goes against his initial opinion?
  
- **How do we let the Holy Spirit inspire us and tell us what He expects?**
  
- **How do we discern as a community?**
  
- **Are our meetings systematically preceded by a time of prayer?**
  
- **With whom do we reflect? Do we sometimes call upon external experts or animation specialists?**

## Theme 2: At the Heart of Our Decisions

### Decisions and Implementation

*"If only all the LORD'S people were prophets on whom the LORD would put his Spirit!" (Num 11:29)*

Synodality implies a conversion in decision-making processes. The Synod emphasizes that fostering the widest possible participation of the People of God is a concrete way of promoting a more missionary and more fraternal Church. Deciding together does not mean denying authority, but exercising it as a service, enlightened by communal discernment. This theme invites us to examine how participation, responsibility, and authority are articulated in parish life.

---

- **Do parish members feel invited to participate in the pastoral mission?**
  - At what level of the mission are they involved: strategic reflection, decision, execution, control, or evaluation?
  - What complementarity exists between the different members?
  
- **How do we recognize each other in order to work together?**
  - Does everyone have a role?
  - Do all have equal dignity?
  
- **What is the role of lay service leaders (catechumenate, baptism prep, funerals, etc.)?**
  
- **From whom do they receive their mission?**
  - Do they organize team meetings?
  - Do they have a say in the recruitment and training of their members?
  - Are there times for review? If so, how often?
  
- **How do our meetings in the parish unfold?**
  - Is there an agenda and minutes?
  - Are decisions shared with the PAT? Other services? The parish?

## Theme 3: Recognizing and Growing Talents

### Management of People Engaged in Our Parish

*"Put yourselves, each according to the gift he has received, at the service of one another, as good stewards of the varied grace of God." (1 Pet 4:10)*

By Baptism, all the faithful share in Christ's mission and receive gifts of the Spirit for the building up of the community. The Synod recalls that the diversity of charisms and ministries is not a secondary richness but something constitutive of the Church. A synodal parish recognizes, calls forth, forms, and supports those who are engaged, so that each person may serve according to the gift he or she has received. This theme helps us discern whether we truly value people's talents and whether we accompany those who place themselves at the service of the mission.

---

- **Identification and management of talents:**

- Does the animation and management of volunteers benefit from specific attention that goes beyond simply meeting parish needs?
- How are the gifts and talents of each person identified to be put at the service of all?
- Are the skills present in the community recognized and valued, ensuring each is sought according to their capacity?
- Are our volunteers supported, thanked, and renewed (e.g., through a specific event, celebration, letter, or training)?
- Does recruitment take into account the desires and charisms of each person?
- Does training take into account the skills each person needs to develop for their role?
- Is the management of employees professional (job descriptions, annual evaluations, fair/legal pay)?

- **Formation:**

- How are the training needs of pastoral actors identified?
- How are appropriate training locations identified and proposed?

## Theme 4: A Community that Takes Care of Each of Its Members

### Fraternity in Our Parish

*"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples: if you have love for one another." (Jn 13:35)*

Synodality is first of all a relational style: walking together means weaving fraternal bonds, respecting differences and recognizing the dignity of each person. The Final Document emphasizes the conversion of relationships as a condition for a credible and missionary Church. A synodal community is a place where people learn to dialogue, to welcome one another, to move through disagreements, and to care for one another. This theme invites us to reflect on the quality of our relationships and on the attention given to the most vulnerable.

---

- **Taking care of priests:**

- As parishioners, are we attentive to weaving a fraternal and adjusted relationship with priests?
- Do we avoid all forms of clericalism (e.g., not putting them on a pedestal)?
- Do we offer them times of conviviality (shared meals, sports)?
- Do we respect their weekly day off, spiritual retreat time, training, and vacations?

- **Conviviality:**

- How are new parishioners welcomed and integrated? Is there a welcome team or a "welcome Mass"?
- Do we create regular moments of encounter or conviviality outside of Mass (e.g., Bible groups, Advent/Lent groups, parish meals)? Are priests involved and present?
- How do we foster unity between generations, sensibilities, and social origins?

- **Fraternal life and fragility:**

- How do we create a climate of trust where everyone can express themselves without fear?
- Where and how do we allow for the expression of disagreement?

- **Openness to differences:**

- How do we allow ourselves to be "displaced" by newcomers (e.g., welcoming catechumens who want to "follow Christ" and not necessarily "be like us")?
- How do we listen to the needs of those outside the parish?
- How do we learn good practices from those outside the parish?
- In what way are we vigilant against the risk of becoming a closed circle?

- Does our organization facilitate fraternal links with other Christian movements, other religions, or local actors?
- Do our teams reflect the actual diversity of our community?

## Theme 5: Guaranteeing Good Governance

### Adjusted Safeguards

*“You know that those who are considered rulers of the nations lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant.” (Mk 10:45)*

*“Do not lord it over those entrusted to you, but be examples to the flock.” (1 Pt 5:3)*

Synodality also calls for a conversion of structures. The Synod emphasizes the importance of transparency, accountability, and mechanisms that prevent abuses and foster trust. Authority in the Church is at the service of the People of God and cannot be exercised in an isolated or opaque manner. This theme helps us examine whether our practices ensure a balanced and responsible governance oriented toward the common good and the mission.

---

- **Are there safeguards to guarantee just authority in our parish?**
  - Are there mechanisms to accompany leaders, prevent abuse, and promote shared governance?
  - Is there a system for reporting an alert?
  - Is there attention to "rotating" teams so that each person grows and no one becomes the "owner" of their position?
- **How are parishioners informed of parish activity and resource management**
  - e.g., parish assembly, journal, budget, accounts)?
- **In what way do the different teams review their activities and report back to the whole parish?**
  - Are there review times to evaluate decisions?
  - If so, how often?

## CONCLUSION

Entering into a synodal process requires courage: the courage to listen to one another, to question ourselves, and to move forward together. It is a deeply joyful path, and experience shows that it helps people grow in trust, fraternity, and mission. We wish you as much joy in this parish reflection as we had in developing this questionnaire.

*Contact* : [pmjderoux@gmail.com](mailto:pmjderoux@gmail.com)