

# Promoting, Organising & Holding your Synodal Meetings

## Before the Meetings

- A few weeks out from when you first meet, explain and promote the synodal process at the end of Sunday Mass. This can be done either by the Parish Priest or by one of the parish contact persons.
- Two weeks before the first meeting have sign-up cards and pencils ready for people to complete with their name and email address/ phone number *before they leave Mass*. Ask them to leave the cards in the pew or to give to a synod volunteer. This is a very successful way of getting across to people the importance of what is happening and encouraging them to take part. It also gives you a good idea of who will be coming along.
- A week before the first event, email the participants thanking them for choosing to take part. You may also want to include some information, either in text or video, about the process. (Feel free to copy and paste information from this site)



## Preparing each Meeting

- The Parish Priest and Parish contacts have a “prep” meeting to decide who is speaking and when. Have notes of this for each person.
- Please consult “Meeting checklist” for the materials and personnel you will need. Have the Meeting Room prepared at least half an hour before the meeting is due to begin.
- Place the bible (Book of the Gospels), open at Luke 24, and candle in a prominent place. You may want to ask a participant to enthrone the book and light the candle at the start of the meeting
- There should be no more than 6/7 people at each table. This is to ensure that each person has the chance to speak and the intimacy required for it.
- On each table there should be
  - Session leaflet for each participant
  - Copy of the biblical text for Lectio Divina
  - Copy of the Synod prayer
  - Paper and pencil for the note-taker
  - A talking piece



- The talking piece is a very useful tool to ensure the smooth order of the meeting. Any person who wishes to speak must ask first for the piece. No-one should speak without holding the piece. The talking piece can be a candle, a rubber ball or whatever but should be big enough to be clearly seen.

## During each Meeting

### Introduction

- Start by enthroning the Bible and lighting the candle. This is a physical way of showing that the meeting is one of prayer.
- You may want to begin with a stilling exercise. See, "Stilling Exercise." A piece of sacred/relaxing music is helpful here.
- Invite the participants to look at the "Introduction" in their leaflets where the fundamental question is posed and the structure of the meeting is explained. Take a few moments to go through this with them.



### The First Part

- The participants are now ready to begin the first part of the meeting, the Lectio Divina. In the Lectio, there are two readings of the sacred text which should be done by two different people.
- During the Meditatio, after some silence each person is asked to speak the word or words which they have identified during the Lectio. Everyone is encouraged to speak. If someone stays silent, the Leader asks if they would like to say something or pass.
- The Oratio is an important moment since it is here that each individual is asked to speak more at length and in their own words for the first time. A quiet piece of music is helpful here to offer some background sound to encourage people to speak.
- In the Contemplatio, don't rush the silence. Silence is central to the process since it gives people time to process what is going on deep within them. Three minutes or so are suggested.
- During the break, something to eat and drink helps the whole group bond and gives an opportunity for the participants to share their thoughts.
- This first part, including the break, should last about 45 minutes.

For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

## The Second Part

- There will be two or three themes to reflect upon at each meeting.
- In step 1, read out the first theme with the associated questions. Explain the step to the participants, emphasising that there is no discussion in this step. Each participant is asked to listen deeply and receptively to the person speaking. Here use of the talking piece is essential since there is a natural temptation to enter into discussion. Some quiet music also helps here.
- Each person is asked to speak for no more than 1-1/2 minutes. If something highly personal is brought up or abusive comments are made, the leader should immediately intervene.
- Repeat for the second theme, and the third where necessary.
- After everyone has had an opportunity to say something on all the themes, go into step 2 which is a period of silence. Again, don't rush the silence.
- Step 3 is a time of dialogue. **What is crucial here is that each participant is asked to respond to something someone else has said. It is not a time for them to expand on what they have already said in step 1.** Again, use of the talking piece is crucial here.
- After the period of silence in step 4, invite all the individuals to form one group as best they can. In this fifth step, individuals are asked to say to the whole group anything which has struck them, offered consolation and hope, raised questions, resonated around their table. **Don't ask the note-takers to give a report.** This is a moment of spontaneous reflection from individuals inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- Conclude with the opportunity for spontaneous prayer. When this is finished or doesn't happen, invite all to say together the synod prayer.
- See the Vademecum 2.3 *Attitudes for Participating in the Synodal Process* and 2.4 *Avoiding Pitfalls*

## After the Meeting

- Collect the notes from the note-takers. During the following week, collate these notes into one document under the headings of the themes discussed. These should be forwarded to [missions@rcdom.org.uk](mailto:missions@rcdom.org.uk)
- Meet together as parish priest and contact persons to review the meeting.
- Email the participants to thank them for their contribution and include the collated document if ready.





## *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*, the first word of the original Latin, meaning, 'We stand before You, Holy Spirit,' which has been historically used at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, and is attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 - 4 April 636). As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace.

*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.*

