



“In this Synod, we too are called to become experts in the art of encounter by taking time to encounter the Lord and one another, to listen to what the Spirit wants to say to the Church.”

– Pope Francis



# SYNOD RESOURCE BOOK

*Communion. Participation. Mission.*



*Thank you!*

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a *Synod Ambassador*!



We have been asked by Pope Francis to begin this journey as a Diocese together by praying, listening, dialoguing, and discerning with one another. As Diocesan Ambassadors you will lead our effort to identify individuals and groups, especially the marginalized and disaffected, and hear their thoughts on their relationship with the Church.

The goal of the synod is to listen to as many Catholics as possible so we may discern the best ways of addressing the challenges we face as a world and walk together on a path of healing and unity through our Catholic faith.

I am most grateful for your outreach to all the corners of our Diocese to capture a diversity of voices and experiences. Please be assured of my support and prayers in this important work.

Wishing you many blessings for your service to Pope Francis and to the Universal Church, I am

Gratefully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert  
Bishop of Allentown





## **Prayer for the Synod** *Adsumus, Sancte Spiritus*

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*

# OPENING SESSION

## Opening of Synod - Sunday, October 17, 2021

<b>3:30 PM</b>	Welcome & Opening Remarks	<i>Bishop Alfred A. Schlert</i>
<b>3:40 PM</b>	Introduction to the Synod	<i>Rev. Mark Searles</i>
<b>3:50 PM</b>	Role of Ambassador	<i>Mr. Paul Acampora</i>
<b>4:00 PM</b>	Role of Priest	<i>Rev. Donald Cieniewicz</i>
<b>4:10 PM</b>	Synod Outreach	<i>Ms. Jessica Edris Sr. Sophia Maria Peralta</i>
<b>4:20 PM</b>	Tips for Facilitating Conversation	<i>Rev. Donald Cieniewicz Dr. Emily Kleintop</i>
<b>4:30 PM</b>	Next Steps	<i>Kim Viti Fiorentino</i>
<b>4:40 PM</b>	Q&A	<i>Panel of Speakers</i>
<b>5:00 PM</b>	Closing Prayer	<i>Monsignor David James</i>

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**“Church and Synod are synonymous.”**

– St. John Chrysostom (347-407)

## The Holy Father wants to hear from you.

Pope Francis has called the entire People of God to journey together by listening, dialoguing, praying, discerning and making decisions together for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"By walking together, and together reflecting on the journey made, the Church will be able to learn from what it will experience which processes can help it to live communion, to achieve participation, to open itself to mission."

*Pope Francis*

## What is a Synod?

'Synod' is an ancient Greek word (*synodos*) with roots meaning: traveling or journeying together; meeting along a certain path or way. A synod can be a local gathering or one that is worldwide such as the present one when the Holy Father and the bishops meet to discuss and to address the needs of the Church after listening to the voices and experiences of their flock.

## What is Synodality?

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

Church and synod become synonymous as we journey together, the Body of Christ, united and striving for greater communion, dynamic participation, and a renewed zeal for mission.

# Role of Synod Ambassador

In the Diocese of Allentown, *Synod Ambassadors* are called to inspire local involvement and participation so that individuals from a wide range of communities can share and reflect on the life and mission of the Church.

Specifically, synod ambassadors will:



## Gather

Through one-on-one calls and visits, meal-time get-togethers, and/or small group discussions, invite people to reflect on their experiences with our Church. Ambassadors may bring people to Synod conversations in person, by phone, through virtual meetings, or by directing participants to online surveys.

## Listen

While Synod Ambassadors may serve as discussion leaders or facilitators, your primary role is to listen so that people can offer their own thoughts about the role of the Church in their lives and in the world.

## Share

Collect and organize your notes from each conversation to share with the Diocesan Synod coordinator.



## Role of Pastors, Priests, and Deacons in Synodal Process

The Synod is to involve the local Churches from the bottom up with caution that the synod cannot be an “elitist” exercise. The Pope stressed this need for open dialogue from among the laity, because sometimes priests become “elitists” and become “the patrons of the barracks.” The synod process needs the support of the local clergy in their role as shepherds of the local flock.

### Role of Pastors and Clergy in the Synod Process:

- Support the synod process by your pastoral presence as the local shepherd
- Active participation of the pastors and priests in the group setting could be intimidating to participants. Be visible, but not “in-charge.”
- Clergy generally are not to facilitate, direct, sway, or comment during the listening sessions. Ambassadors could invite clergy participation with the likes of clarification of theological questions. The clergy should strive for passive participation at the listening sessions unless circumstances necessitate pastoral intervention.
- Accompany the Ambassador and the participants; don't direct the process
- Be available for guidance and questions
- Support Ambassadors in their duties
- Offer invitations to sessions after Masses
- Mention the synod process in homilies and weekly bulletins; encourage participation
- Offer pre-gathering Holy Half-Hour opportunities for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- Be a resource for questions and follow-up

## Synod Outreach

We have nearly 200 *Synod Ambassadors* from every county of the Diocese from parishes, schools, and ministries, representing the rich diversity of those we serve. The collection of the outreach will span ages, race, gender, generation, and strength of their affiliation with the church of today.

## Who do we talk to?

The objective of the Diocesan phase of the synod is intended to reach out to *all baptized Catholics* regardless of their current faith practice. They can be regular attendees at Mass or haven't been there in years. All Ambassadors should take special care to reach out to those who may be at risk of being excluded: including the divorced and civilly remarried, the handicapped, refugees, migrants, the elderly, people who live in poverty, and Catholics who no longer practice their faith. It is important to reach as many voices as we can, including those who are marginalized or disaffiliated with the Church.

As a *Synod Ambassador*, you have been selected for those who you might already know and for those whom you may be able to provide outreach. Consider your immediate circle of friends, family, and colleagues and then stretch to consider others who can offer a diversity of viewpoints - those in your parish now and previously.

## How do we reach out?

Outreach to others can be completed in a variety of forms. Large or small group listening sessions as parishes or schools may be most common; however, one-on-one outreach is also possible to capture feedback. In addition, outreach can be done in-person, online, or video conferencing options like Zoom.

You can share your role as *Synod Ambassador* in your local parish or school communications and invite all to contact you to provide feedback. In addition, you can utilize your local websites, bulletin inserts, or social media to assist in promoting listening sessions.

As a starting point, reach out to your Pastor, Campus Ministry office, or local Diocesan representative to begin a conversation on how best to begin. In addition, the Diocesan Working Committee can offer suggestions to support your effort.



## What do we talk about?

The synodal process is a *spiritual process* and should be oriented toward discernment. Discernment involves sharing reflections and engaging the heart and mind in seeking God and his will for us.

A synodal Church journeys together. As such, the fundamental question of the Synod is this:

**How is this 'journeying' happening today in your local Church?**

**What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in journeying together?**

Participants are invited to recall their own experiences with the Church and reflect on the joys and challenges they reveal. In this reflection, we can seek the Holy Spirit and see what it may be asking of us and what pathways for the Church they may inspire.

In this process, it is helpful to note that as a faith community, we journey together with one another as People of God and as a human family. Below are a few themes offered to help encourage conversation and dialogue:

- Being Catholic / Awareness of God's plan for one's life and how to develop a relationship with the Lord
- Participation in Church or parish sacramental life or social outreach
- Communications among membership/community in the Diocese of Allentown and our leadership, clergy and ministries
- Comfort from their Faith / Knowledge of core teachings of the Church such as the Real Presence of Christ
- Difficulties or disaffection with their faith or the Church
- Ways to journey together as a Universal, Catholic Faith Community

## Facilitating Conversations

*Synod Ambassadors* may lead discussion in small groups as part of outreach. It is important to create a welcoming environment for participants to feel free to share their thoughts and ideas. Set a positive tone by explaining the purpose of the group session and reminding everyone that all voices are encouraged to be heard in a respectful manner. Before facilitating the listening group, be sure to familiarize yourself with the synod document and the questions to be presented for participant feedback.

### Begin and End with Prayer

It is recommended that each listening session begin with a half-hour of Adoration or quiet time before the Blessed Sacrament. This will help set a prayerful tone for the listening session that will follow. Each listening sessions is to start and end with the Synod Prayer.

### For Group Sessions

Each set of Ambassador facilitators will need to determine the best way to proceed, depending on the size of the group and the logistics of the gathering space. It is recommended to have at least two Ambassador facilitators for each group.

Large groups can present more of a challenge for facilitating and allowing for participants to share their thoughts. If possible, try to break down large gatherings of people into smaller groups. If smaller groups are not feasible, then facilitators should plan their strategy to provide a welcoming and organized format.

Ideally, group sizes should include 8 – 12 participants. A second facilitator is a good idea to ensure the discussion stays on track and the main facilitator has assistance, if needed. A large gathering of respondents can be broken down into smaller groups to help facilitate discussion.

### Individual Sessions

In the event someone asks to meet privately, this private session should take place in the public setting of a parish office or facility. Such meetings are to be arranged so as to guarantee that others are present in the same facility. Seek to offer privacy within the public setting. Should the scenario of a spontaneous encounter occur (after Mass, at the grocery store, etc.), engage the interested person as best you can in that particular setting. Be sure to document the ideas shared afterwards.

# Key Considerations for Conversations

## Safety

For the safety of facilitators and group members, meetings should only take place in the parish, school, or diocesan office/entity. Meetings in private homes or other offsite locations are not permitted.

## Confidentiality

The privacy of everyone in the group should be respected. Remind members to keep confidential anything that was shared in the group.

## Avoid Teaching and Preaching

The facilitator's role is to lead discussions among the members. Do not share your opinion or sway the group toward any particular viewpoint. Help the group maintain focus and keep the session moving.

## Begin and End on Time

Be respectful of group members' time. Have a timekeeper and maintain focus and keep the session moving.

## Take Notes

A reliable person should be designated to record basic comments shared by the participants. These points will be summarized and then be part of the local report that is to be submitted for evaluation on the diocesan level.

## Refreshments

Facilitators might consider offering simple and light refreshments for group gatherings. Refreshments help provide a welcoming and relaxing atmosphere. Ambassadors should consider this option according to local custom and logistics.

# How to Facilitate Synod Sessions

## Review the ground rules before the session:

- Remind members to keep confidential anything that was shared in the group.
- Show respect for one another (no criticism or judgment).
- Be courteous; only one person may talk at a time.
- No one is required to talk, but participation is encouraged.
- Be brief in responses and allow ample time for everyone to share.
- Purpose of the synod is not to debate, but to listen. Be positive and constructive.

## Group Sessions

If the group cannot get started, consider:

- Rephrase the question.
- Go around the group and ask if anyone has a response.
- Go back to your basic questions: What do you think?
- Skip whatever is halting the discussion and move on.

## If someone dominates the discussion:

Learn the art of interruption:

- *"Excuse me, Dave, before you continue may I ask if anyone has a comment?"*
- *"That's a good point. Let's move on to someone else."*
- *"We haven't heard from this side of the room. Let's hear from someone else."*
- *"Martha, time is short. Please summarize your remarks so we can hear from others"*

Review the ground rules, if necessary.

## If the group strays off the topic:

- "This is an important topic, but we don't have time to talk about it here."
- State the issue: "I think we've gotten off track."
- "That's interesting. But how does it relate to the topic?"

## The discussion becomes too heated:

- Remind participants that the purpose of the synod is not to debate, but to listen. Be positive and constructive.
- "We have two views here. Does anyone else have a view to share?"

## Diocese of Allentown Synod Working Group

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Most Rev. Alfred A. Schlert, *Bishop of Allentown*

Rev. Msgr. David James, *Vicar General*

Mrs. Kim Viti Fiorentino, *Diocesan Synod Coordinator*

Mr. Paul Acampora

Reverend Donald Cieniewicz, M.Div.

Ms. Jessica Edris

Dr. Phil Fromuth

Ms. Ana Hidalgo

Dr. Emily Kleintop

Reverend Keith Mathur, M.Div., M.A.

Deacon Charles Palmeri

Sister Sophia Marie Peralta

Mrs. Maggie Riggins

Reverend Philip Rodgers, M.Div.

Ms. Pamela Russo

Ms. Annie Sarlo

Reverend Mark Searles, M.Div., M.A.

Mrs. Alexa Smith

Mr. Paul Wirth

**Have a question or need help?**

**Contact us!**

[synod@allentowndiocese.org](mailto:synod@allentowndiocese.org)

610 - 871-5200

## Key Dates

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**Opening Mass and Meeting** - October 17, 2021, 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM

*Learn about the Synod process and outreach goals*

**Outreach Period** - October 2021 to February 2022

*Begin listening sessions and take summary notes*

**Ambassador Update Meeting** - January 19, 2022, 6:00 PM

*Meeting to be held via Zoom*

**Outreach Summary Deadline** - March 1, 2022

*Summarize your listening sessions and provide your report online*

For additional resources, regularly check our Synod website:

[www.allentowndiocese.org/synod](http://www.allentowndiocese.org/synod)

## Important Notes

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## DIOCESE OF ALLENTOWN

[allentowndiocese.org](http://allentowndiocese.org) | [ad-today.com](http://ad-today.com) | [yearofrealpresence.org](http://yearofrealpresence.org)