

Walking the Path of Synodality in the Footsteps of Pope Francis



A Six-Session Synodal Leadership Formation Course

Train the Trainer



Resources Available for Facilitators

Facilitator's Guide

Participant Handouts

Slide Decks

"Out of the box" design



Facilitator's Guide

- Review the six sessions and be familiar with the content and format.
- There are videos and reading materials for participants to watch/read to prepare for the upcoming session that you will need to review as well.
- At the end of each session, participants identify something they will do in the time between sessions to practice a synodal principle.
- The presentation during each session is brief to ensure that the formation occurs through experience rather than lectures.

Create a Transformational Experience through:

- Prayerful discernment
- Adult learning principles
- Faith Sharing and Spiritual Conversations
- Participants getting to know/trust one another, so they are able to be vulnerable and experience growth

Components of each session

- Preparation materials (articles, videos)
- Welcome, Overview, Review of prior session
- Scripture Reflection
- Content presentation
- Silent Reflection & Discussion groups
- Concluding Commitment
- Closing Prayer
- Looking toward next session and additional resources

Synodal Leadership Formation Course:

Facilitator
Guide
and Session
Content



Variety of Formats – Schedules to Adapt

- In Person
- Online
- Hybrid
- Weekly/monthly or a 3 day retreat format
- Adaptable!

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Intended Audience

- Your ministry group, parish, religious organization, diocese, or religious order?
- Volunteer groups, paid staff, pastoral or parish council, and senior leadership teams?
- A mix of laity, religious, and ordained participants?
- A variety of ages?
- Groups can be as small as three people or as large as 30 people.
- If the group members have had no prior experience in small group prayer and reflection, some additional introduction to those practices might be necessary

The role of the facilitator

Synodal Leadership Formation Course: Facilitator Guide and Session Content



As a Facilitator, you are asked to:



Establish

- Establish clear boundaries of time and topic for presenters

Interrupt

- Gently interrupt a participant who talks disproportionately more than others

Redirect

- Gently redirect a participant who is off-topic by acknowledging their contribution and thanking them for their contribution

Refocus

- Gently refocus a participant preoccupied with an issue that is not pertinent to the topic or inhibits the participation of others in the group

Set

- Set ground rules and expectations at the start of the session by emphasizing the need for broad participation and

A Spiritual Conversation



Meaningful conversation rooted in active listening

Relaxed grip on certainty; attention to possibilities

Paying attention to deep meaning

Inviting the Holy Spirit to lead Transformative conversation

Be brief... share what matters most

Each person shares once before anyone speaks a second time

Share the time so everyone can speak

Speak slowly and intentionally

Allow pauses; silence is okay

Look at the person speaking

Listen without preparing a response

Seek to build on other people's contributions and not debate

There is no need to convince anyone of anything – only to deepen our understanding

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Session 2: Active Listening for Synodal Leadership



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Learning Objectives

1

Get to know one another more

2

Reflect on how Jesus listened to people on the margins

3

Examine how we listen to others

4

Consider how listening is essential to synodal leadership

5

Learn how to use a tool for deep listening

6

Commit to listening more effectively

Scripture Reflection



Scripture Reflection

- Why did Jesus need to ask, "What do you want Me to do for you?"
- How does the blind man represent people on the "side of the road" of society today?



Small Group Sharing

1. Who in your life do you wish you had listened to more, and why?
2. How would you describe the difference between passive and active listening?
3. Why might someone be afraid to listen deeply to others (below the surface of their words)



Synodality: Revolution in Listening

Presentation



Having Real Conversations

Listening, not lobbying

Discerning, not voting

Praying, not politicking



Conditions for meaningful sharing



	Level of Listening	Listening Perspective	Awareness
1	DOWNLOADING	Listen From Habit	Reconfirming what we already know
2	FACTUAL <i>Open Mind</i>	Listen From Outside	Noticing disconfirming information
3	EMPATHETIC <i>Open Heart</i>	Listen From Within	Seeing through the eyes of another
4	CONTEMPLATIVE <i>Open Will</i>	Listen From Spirit	Discerning inner movements and invitations
5	GENERATIVE	Listen and Respond from the Whole	Holding space for something new to be born; seeing potential

Silent Reflection

1. What is the narrative of my call to purpose, service, and responsibility?
2. How do I currently find God present in my vocation?



Deep Listening Exercise

Choose Timekeeper



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graph TD; A[Choose Timekeeper] --> B[Begin with 30 seconds of silence and deep breathing.]; B --> C[Each person shares the story of their vocation (4 min)]; C --> D[After everyone has shared, each person briefly responds]; D --> E[Close with about 30 seconds of silence and a Glory Be.];
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Begin with 30 seconds of silence and deep breathing.

Each person shares the story of their vocation (4 min)

After everyone has shared, each person briefly responds

Close with about 30 seconds of silence and a Glory Be.

Large Group Sharing

What did you notice and appreciate about the breakout group conversation?

What about the conditions set for the breakout group stood out to you?

What value is there in reconnecting with your vocational story?

Concluding Commitments

What is one situation where you can practice listening to others more profoundly or actively between now and the next session?



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

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Forming Your Cohort



Taking part in all six sessions



Completing about 45 minutes of **preparation** between sessions (such as watching a video, reading an article, or keeping a journal).



Being actively engaged - These are active sessions with discussions, prayers, discernment, questions, and breakout group exercises.

Integration Session - Online

Tuesday, January 13, 2026 – 2 to 3 PM Eastern

All are welcome to an open discussion regarding ways they have implemented some or all of the curriculum and/or ways they are furthering synodality in their life and mission.

Questions

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Answers

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