



Format for a Parish Meeting

How we pray together

Before the Meeting

You will need:

- Copies of *Reflections from Scripture and Tradition*
- Paper for writing proposals on
- Pens
- Synod Prayer cards

You might also consider having a prayer focus including a Synod Candle and some cloths in the Synod colours.

Introduction and Welcome

We are meeting to reflect on our second Synod Theme, **How we pray together**. We will hear a little of what was said to inspire this Theme, reflect on Scripture and Tradition as we try to understand God's dream for his Church, and generate proposals for action to put forward to the Synod.

Opening Prayer

Loving God,
Give us hearts that desire to be open to you.
May our lives be a prayer of offering.
May our worship remind us of our need of you.
May we know the truth that wherever we gather,
you are present in our midst.
Fill our hearts with a love and need for prayer
that we might be more effective
in the world in which we live.
We ask this through Christ our Lord
Amen.

Reflecting on the Synod Listening

This first part of our reflection looks at what was said during the Synod Listening. Some of the things that led to this Theme are:

- Sunday Mass is central to everything.
- People respond to different styles of prayer and liturgy.
- Liturgy needs to support families as they strive to nurture the faith of their children.
- Prayer is a source of strength.
- It is a joy to have children at Mass.
- Living and working patterns can make Sunday Mass attendance difficult.
- Liturgy and Worship are central to the mission of our Catholic schools.
- Our Church buildings are deeply valued as places of prayer.
- And much more!

In the light of what people said invite the participants to reflect on the following questions:

- In 1990 137,000 people came to Mass each weekend, last year the number was 40,000. Why have so many stopped praying with us on Sunday?

- If you wanted to learn more about prayer or scripture who/where would you ask?
- How can we make our churches places of prayer through the week?
- Can our churches be left open during the week?
- How can we celebrate the sacraments in a way that helps those who don't regularly attend Mass?
- Is your home (school) a place where you find it easy to pray? What might help you to pray more at home or at school?
- Does the celebration of Mass in your parish help you to grow in how you live your faith through the week?
- How are the sick and housebound included in the prayer and worship of your parish? Do they know that they are valued members of your parish?

You might like to invite some sharing of people's responses to these questions.

Gospel Reading (Matthew 6: 7-15)

Jesus said to his disciples: 'In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him. So you should pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,
 may your name be held holy,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.
 Give us today our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts,
 as we have forgiven those
 who are in debt to us.
 And do not put us to the test,
 but save us from the evil one.

Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.'

Questions for Reflection

- Think of a time when you felt fully engaged in praying with others. What helped this to happen?
- How did you learn to pray? How have your ways of praying changed over time?
- What helps you to pray now?
- What different styles of prayer appeal to different groups of people?
- How does the regular Sunday liturgy relate to your daily life?
- How well do the sermons you hear at Mass connect with your experience and your concerns?

Give an opportunity for people to ponder these questions before inviting them to share anything that strikes them. You could consider using stones and the listening technique here.

Reflections from Scripture and Tradition

Distribute the reflections from Scripture and Tradition and invite people to reflect on them, underlining anything that strikes them. Participants are then invited to share their reflections.

Generating Proposals

Having reflected on the situation, how our faith informs us and what needs to be done in order to become the Church God is calling us to be, what is your proposal for action?

Invite everybody to write one proposal and collect them in. Thank people for taking part in this meeting and explain what will happen next:

- All proposals submitted in the Parish will be brought to a discernment meeting.
- At this meeting the five proposals that our Parish will submit to Synod 2020 will be decided.
- We will let you know what the final choices are.

The meeting concludes with the Synod prayer.

Other Resources

There are video resources – Archbishop Malcolm’s introduction to the Theme and a Theological Reflection – available on the Synod 2020 website that you may like to use should the facilities be available. See www.synod2020.co.uk/themes/prayer

Reflections from Scripture and Tradition

How we pray together

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”
Luke 11:1

And Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in memory of me.”
Luke 22:19

Prayer is a surge of the heart, it is a simple look turned towards heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.
St Teresa of Lisieux

In the liturgy all Christian prayer finds its source and goal.
Catechism 1073

The active participation called for by the Council must be understood in more substantial terms, on the basis of a greater awareness of the mystery being celebrated and its relationship to daily life.
Pope Benedict XVI, Sacramentum Caritatis, 52

Our prayer cannot be reduced to an hour on Sundays. It is important to have a daily relationship with the Lord.
Pope Francis, Daily Mass Sermon 2019

