



Format for a Parish Meeting

Building community, nurturing belonging

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 fourth Synod Theme, **Building community, nurturing belonging**. 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,
Teach us how to pray in the midst of a busy world.
May we open our hearts to you
and in the power of your Spirit
build community and nurture belonging that we,
as Church, might be a sign of contradiction in the world
and help others to see an alternative way of living.
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:

- Children should feel safe and loved in our Church.
- Divisions leave people feeling marginalised and pushed to the fringes.
- Young people should feel fully part of the community.
- Parishes are important for building community in a fractured society.
- The Church is vital in welcoming and valuing the weak and the vulnerable.
- Find better ways of handing on the faith.
- Housebound or infirm should still feel part of our communities.
- Belonging to a parish community is good for children and families.
- And much more!

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

- How do we ensure our parishes are inclusive and welcoming?
- How do we hand on our faith? Can you think of ways to do this better?
- How can we encourage and support the work of our Catholic schools?
- How can we support and strengthen the home, school, parish partnership?

- How do we reach out to those who feel excluded, on the margins, weak, or vulnerable?
- How do our parishes grow in love for God and service of our neighbour?
- How can parishes work better together?
- What will the parish of the future be like - given a realistic look at the numbers of priests and people we have?

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

Scripture Reading (Romans 12:9-19)

Do not let your love be a pretence, but sincerely prefer good to evil. Love each other as much as brothers should, and have a profound respect for each other. Work for the Lord with untiring effort and with great earnestness of spirit. If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come; and keep on praying. If any of the saints are in need you must share with them; and you should make hospitality your special care. Bless those who persecute you: never curse them, bless them. Rejoice with those who rejoice and be sad with those in sorrow. Treat everyone with equal kindness; never be condescending but make real friends with the poor. Do not allow yourself to become self-satisfied. Never repay evil with evil but let everyone see that you are interested only in the highest ideals. Do all you can to live at peace with everyone.

Questions for Reflection

- Pope Francis reminds us that we love God by caring and loving each other, this is at the heart of our faith.
- Individualism gives way to solidarity. In what way do I try to do this in my own life?
- Pope St John Paul II says we must do all we can to support families, especially in handing on the faith. What is my experience of this in my own family, in my parish?
- How do the families I know show their care for each other and for those in need?
- Have I seen evidence of parish communities becoming families in themselves, drawing in and including those who don't have a supportive family network?

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/community

Reflections from Scripture and Tradition

Building community, nurturing belonging

To be part of a Christian community is to belong to a group of believers who shun selfishness and give witness to God's love by loving and caring for one another. While modern society places more importance on 'one's own interests regardless of or even to the detriment of others', true Christians 'ban individualism in order to encourage sharing and solidarity'.

Pope Francis, Wednesday audience, 26 June 2019

The family is the basic cell of society. It is the cradle of life and love, the place in which the individual 'is born' and 'grows'.

...We cannot make too great an effort to prepare our parents to be catechists of their own children.

Pope St John Paul II, Christifideles Laici, 40

The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honour God and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society. The family should live in such a way that its members learn to care and take responsibility for the young, the old, the sick, the handicapped, and the poor. There are many families who are at times incapable of providing this help. It devolves then on other persons, and also on society, to provide for their needs.

Catechism of the Catholic Church 2207, 2208

