

Consultation Script

Structuring of the Conversation

- Incorporate prayer, reflection, listening and discussion
- Focus on the fundamental questions
- Allow for other questions and responses that emerge within the process
- Each consultation should have one facilitator and one note-taker
- Incorporate moments of silence and prayer throughout the consultation, if appropriate
- Encourage an informal conversational approach for all to participate
- Provide a handout with the Opening Prayer, the Holy Spirit Prayer and the Questions.
- Provide everyone with a pencil or pen and provide space on the handout for each person to write notes for each question.
- Depending on the size of the group, break them into smaller groups, if necessary. Each group should have a facilitator and a note-taker.

Flow of the Conversation

1. Open with the Synod Prayer

**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.**

2. Explain the Purpose and Focus of the Gathering

Pope Francis announced a meeting of the Synod of Bishops to take place in Rome in October, 2023. To prepare for the meeting, the Pope has asked all Dioceses throughout the world to enter into dialogue with all baptized persons. He has asked that we have "listening sessions" that will help the Church to be more aware of concerns and experiences of the faithful. He wants the Church to journey with its members to listen to their experiences and to seek their advice.

Today is an opportunity for our parish to be part of this process with Catholics throughout the world. We will spend some time exploring, listening and reflecting on some common questions being asked throughout our Diocese. Please be open and honest. This is our opportunity for the Church to learn from our experiences, hopes, dreams and desires. From these sessions, a report on behalf of our Diocese will be sent to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to prepare for the Synod of Bishops.

*In Romans 12: 4-6, 9 we read, "**For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts on one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace give to us, let***

us exercise them ... Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love each other with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor."

The central questions we will be exploring are:

- *How does "journeying together" happen in our local Church?*
- *What has been your experience of how the Church has journeyed with you?*
- *What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?*
- *As Bishop Taylor and our Church listens, what else is important for them to hear?*

NOTE: If more explanation about the questions is necessary, you might also explain that these central questions are shedding light on whether a person feels a part of the Church and what that experience looks like. What is your experience of Church, do you feel a part of the Church? How can the Church make you feel more included? When and how have you experienced the movement of the Holy Spirit in your life and the life of the Church? What brings you joy – in the Church, in your life?

To prepare for our conversation, let us bow our heads and pray together:

**Come Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit
and they shall be created.
And You shall renew the face of the earth.**

**O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit,
did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
grant that by the same Holy Spirit
we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His
consolations,
Through Christ Our Lord.**

Using your handout with these printed questions, please take a few moments to silently reflect and perhaps write down some thoughts before we open the session up to comments.

NOTE: Possibly play some reflective music. When you feel most are ready for discussion, then draw the group's attention and open up discussion. Ask everyone to speak slowly and distinctly so the person taking notes can keep up.

Who would like to open with a reflection on the first question, "How does "journeying together" happen in our local Church?"

NOTE: It is helpful periodically to ask clarifying questions and to summarize what someone has said. Proceed through each of the questions, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide your conversation. When you have discussed all the questions thoroughly; it will be time to conclude the session.

On behalf of our pastor, (INSERT NAME), we want to thank each and every one of you for your honesty and insights. At the conclusion of our parish's listening sessions, a report will be sent to the Diocese that will highlight your experiences and suggestions. These will be read by the Bishop and a final report will be sent to the USCCB. Please pray for the success of the Synod of Bishops and for the presence of the Holy Spirit in all their discussions. Let's conclude our time together with prayer.

NOTE: The facilitator should use a prayer of his/her preference.