



A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together."

How is this "journeying together" happening today in your local Church?

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

REFLECTION GUIDE:

Document for the Continental Stage

The Working Document for the Continental Stage (DCS) gathers and restores to the local Churches what the People of God from around the world said in the first year of the Synod. It is meant to guide us and enable us to deepen our discernment, keeping in mind the basic question that animates the entire process: *"How does this 'journeying together,' ... allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to Her; and what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?"* (PD, no.2).

NOTE: If you are working in a group of five or more, you may need to set aside 1.5 hours to use this guide appropriately.

PREPARING FOR THE GROUP REFLECTION SESSION

Prior to your meeting with other members of your group, it is recommended that you read through the *Working Document for the Continental Stage* and work through the steps of this document for yourself.

- Take time to pray, perhaps using the synodal prayer at Step 1 in this guide.
- Read the document.
- Allow time after your first reading to meditate on the document and observe your response.
- Read the document a second time, and note what in the document spoke to you.
- Consider if there is anything you believe should be added to the content and themes included.
- Prepare yourself to discuss your reflections with the group.

PRAY
TOGETHER

READ QUESTIONS
AND REFLECT

SHARE AND
LISTEN

PRAY AND
SUBMIT YOUR
RESPONSE

At the beginning of the group reflection, you are invited to pray together.

The Scripture passage guiding the Continental Stage is from Isaiah 54:2:

*Enlarge the space of your tent, spread out your tent cloths unsparingly,
lengthen your ropes and make firm your pegs.*

Take time to meditate on this verse and on what God is sharing about the synodal journey through it.

You may also find it useful to consult the resource on *Scripture at the Heart of the Synodal Journey* for information on praying with Scripture. This can be found at:

<https://bit.ly/SynodBiblicalResources>

When you pray, you can use the words written below or just speak to God from your heart.

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.

STEP 02

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on the following questions in silence. These guiding questions are found in paragraph 106 of the DCS.

Write a list of all the responses to these questions that come to mind.

1. EXPERIENCES OF CHURCH

- After having read and prayed with the DCS, what resonates most strongly with the lived experiences and realities of the Church in your continent?
- Which experiences are new, or illuminating to you?

2. CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS

- After having read and prayed with the DCS, what significant tensions or differences emerge as particularly important in your continent's perspective?
- Consequently, what are the questions or issues that should be addressed and considered in the next steps of the process?

3. PRIORITIES AND CALLS TO ACTION

- Looking at what emerges from the previous two questions:
 - What are the priorities, recurring themes and calls to action that can be shared with other local Churches around the world?
 - What should be discussed during the First Session of the Synodal Assembly in October 2023?

Briefly share aloud your responses, working together in Step 3.

ROUND 1: SHARING MY REFLECTION ON THE THREE QUESTIONS

- The facilitator poses each question and invites the group to respond.
- Everyone speaks for one or two minutes adding to what has previously been shared.
- When others are speaking, remember to listen with an open and humble heart. The focus is to listen to others, rather than simply thinking about what you want to say.
- At the end of each question, the group pauses for a moment of silence. This may help absorb what was said, take a breather, and return to the next question.
- As participants are sharing, the facilitator takes brief notes of what has been discussed.

ROUND 2: REFLECTING ON THE GROUP RESPONSE

- After the sharing on the three guiding questions, this round is an opportunity to begin to prepare the group response.
- Here the group is invited to answer the question:
 - *As you listened to everyone's reflection, what struck you in a new way?*
- The facilitator makes notes of key points emerging from the group's reflection.
- At the end of this sharing, the group pauses for a period of silence.

ROUND 3: RESPONDING TO THE DOCUMENT

- In this round, reflect on the question:
 - *Thinking about what you have read in the DCS, and reflecting on the Church in Australia at this time, what should be included in our group's response?*
- After everyone has finished speaking, the facilitator reconfirms the key points with the group and prepares a summarised version of the discussion.

STEP
04

Pray and Submit Your Response

At the end of the reflection time, you are invited to pray together. You can use the words below, or you might like to say a prayer of gratitude in your own words.

Creator God, we thank you for the encounter with one another today.

We know that where two or three are gathered, you are in our midst.

Thank you for being with us and for the courage to speak boldly and with passion, and the humility to listen with open hearts.

We ask you to continue to walk with us, as we discover the pathway toward the future you are calling us to.

Amen.

SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSE

- It is recommended that the group's response be captured in a short summary of a paragraph per question. You may find it helpful to compose this in a separate document and cut and paste the text into the online submission portal.
- You will be asked to include 5 to 7 key points that capture the important parts of the discussion.
- Your response should reflect the diversity of views and opinions expressed, both positive and negative. It should be faithful to the people's voices and to whatever emerged from their reflection, rather than a series of generalized or doctrinally correct statements.
- Views should not be excluded simply because they were expressed by a small minority of participants.
- Overall, the response should capture what the Holy Spirit has inspired the group to respond to the DCS.

Your group's response will become your submission to the National Centre for Pastoral Research. From **Friday 4 November 2022**, you will be able to submit your response online at <https://www.catholic.org.au/synodalchurch> via a **SUBMISSION** link.

All responses must be submitted by **Friday 9 December 2022**.



Thank you for contributing to the discernment process of the
XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

*“Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus,
Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God
something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness”
(Phil. 2:5-7)*

