

# For a Synodal Church...



Jesus shows us that God is not found in neat and orderly places, distant from reality, but walks ever at our side. He meets us where we are, on the often rocky roads of life.

LET US BEGIN by asking ourselves, all of us, whether we, the Christian Community embody this “style” of God, who travels the paths of history and shares in the life of humanity.

Are we prepared for the adventure of this journey? Or are we fearful of the unknown, preferring to take refuge in the usual excuses: “It’s useless” or “We’ve always done it this way”?



**“Celebrating a Synod means walking on the same road, walking TOGETHER.”**

POPE FRANCIS: Homily, Opening of the Synodal Path. October 10, 2021



“Jesus came down with the Twelve and stood on a stretch of level ground with a great crowd of his disciples and a large number of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. ...raising his eyes he said,

**BLESSED ARE YOU...”**



“No human being is unworthy in the eyes of God...”

PD #23





“Synodality is the way of being the Church today according to the will of God, in a dynamic of discerning and listening together to the voice of the Holy Spirit.”



... We recall that the purpose of the Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but "to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands ...



PD #32



# Synod is “JOURNEYING TOGETHER...”



in and through the real world  
in which we live *with all others.*

“Synodality” is the main road  
for the Church, the way to be

*renewed*

under the action of the

*Holy Spirit*

and by *listening* to the Word.

PD#9



# For a Synodal Church...



## + COMMUNION:

Gathered as diverse peoples; all have a role to play in discerning and living out God's call for God's people

## + PARTICIPATION:

All the faithful are qualified; the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together. Genuine efforts must be made to include those on the margins or who feel excluded.

## + MISSION:

We can never be centered on ourselves. The mission is to witness to the love of God for the whole human family.

*“Jesus came down with the Twelve and stood on a stretch of **level ground** with a great crowd of his disciples, and a large number of the people” from everywhere and of every persuasion!*

*Gospel of Luke 6:17 Sixth Sunday Ordinary time -C*

# “BLESSED ARE YOU...!”

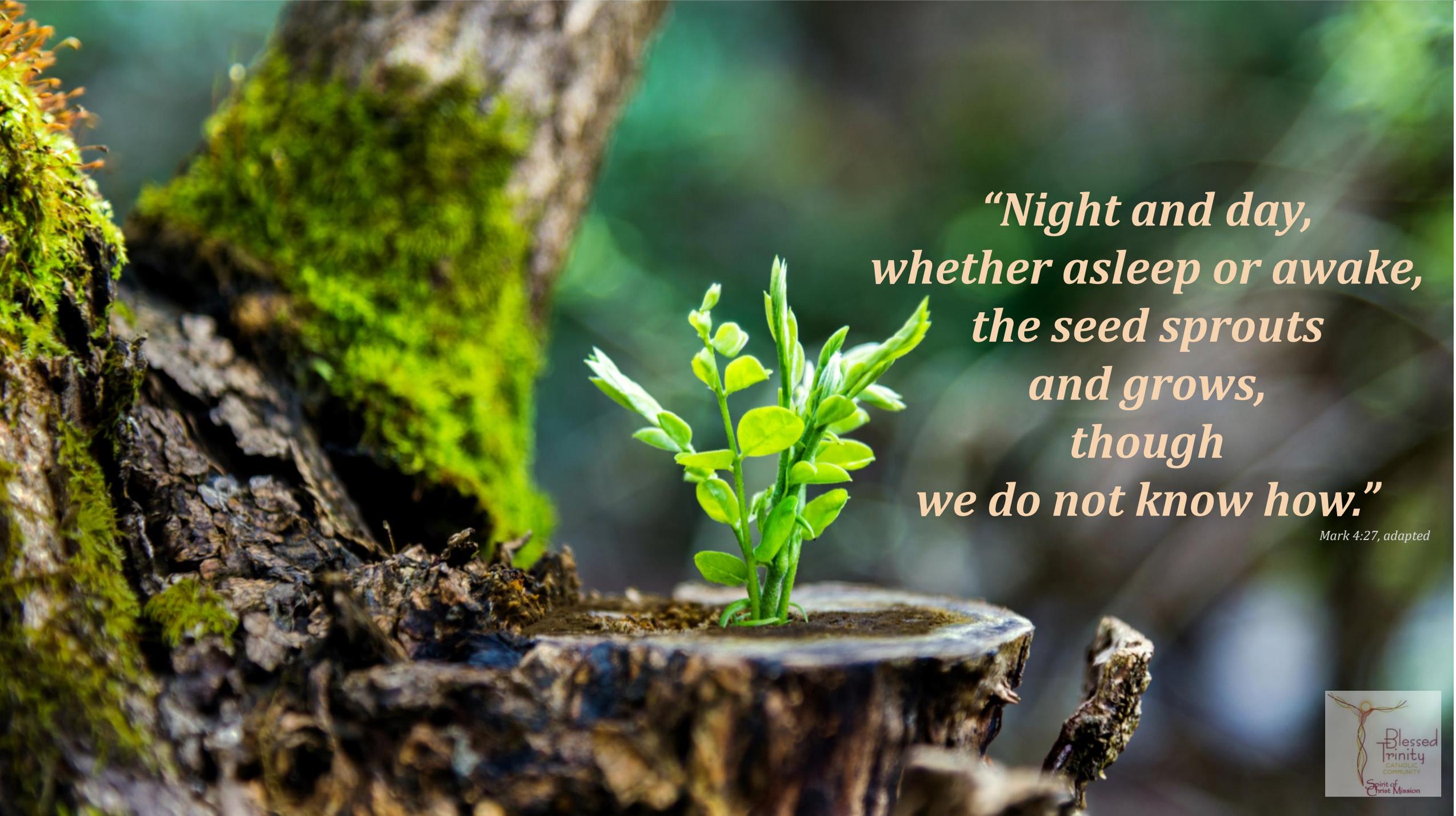


# Preparing our HEARTS and VOICES...

The “SYNODAL PROCESS”  
is first and foremost  
a SPIRITUAL process,  
it is not  
a mechanical  
data-gathering exercise  
or a series  
of meetings and debates...



...SYNODAL LISTENING  
IS ORIENTED TOWARD  
DISCERNMENT.”

A young green sprout with several leaves and a small bud at the top is growing out of a dark, hollowed-out tree stump. The background is a soft-focus forest scene with green foliage and a tree trunk covered in moss on the left side.

*“Night and day,  
whether asleep or awake,  
the seed sprouts  
and grows,  
though  
we do not know how.”*

*Mark 4:27, adapted*

# WE BEGIN WITH HOPE...



“For there is hope for a tree,  
if it is cut down, that it will  
sprout again, and that its  
shoots will not cease. Though  
its root grows old in the earth,  
and its stump dies in the  
ground, yet at the scent of  
water it will bud and put forth  
branches like a young plant.”

*The Book of Job 14:7-9*



# The challenges...



## WORLD & NATION...

- ❖ A global pandemic
- ❖ Local and international conflicts
- ❖ Climate change
- ❖ Migration
- ❖ Various forms of injustice
- ❖ Racism
- ❖ Violence
- ❖ Persecution
- ❖ Inequalities
- ❖ Human rights abuse
- ❖ Belief in lies
- ❖ Division
- ❖ A “tribal” mentality

## THE CHURCH...

- ❖ Sexual abuse
- ❖ Abuse of power
- ❖ Abuse of Conscience
- ❖ Clericalism
- ❖ Theological divisions
- ❖ Liturgical divisions
- ❖ Ministry of women
- ❖ Collaborative ministry
- ❖ Social outreach

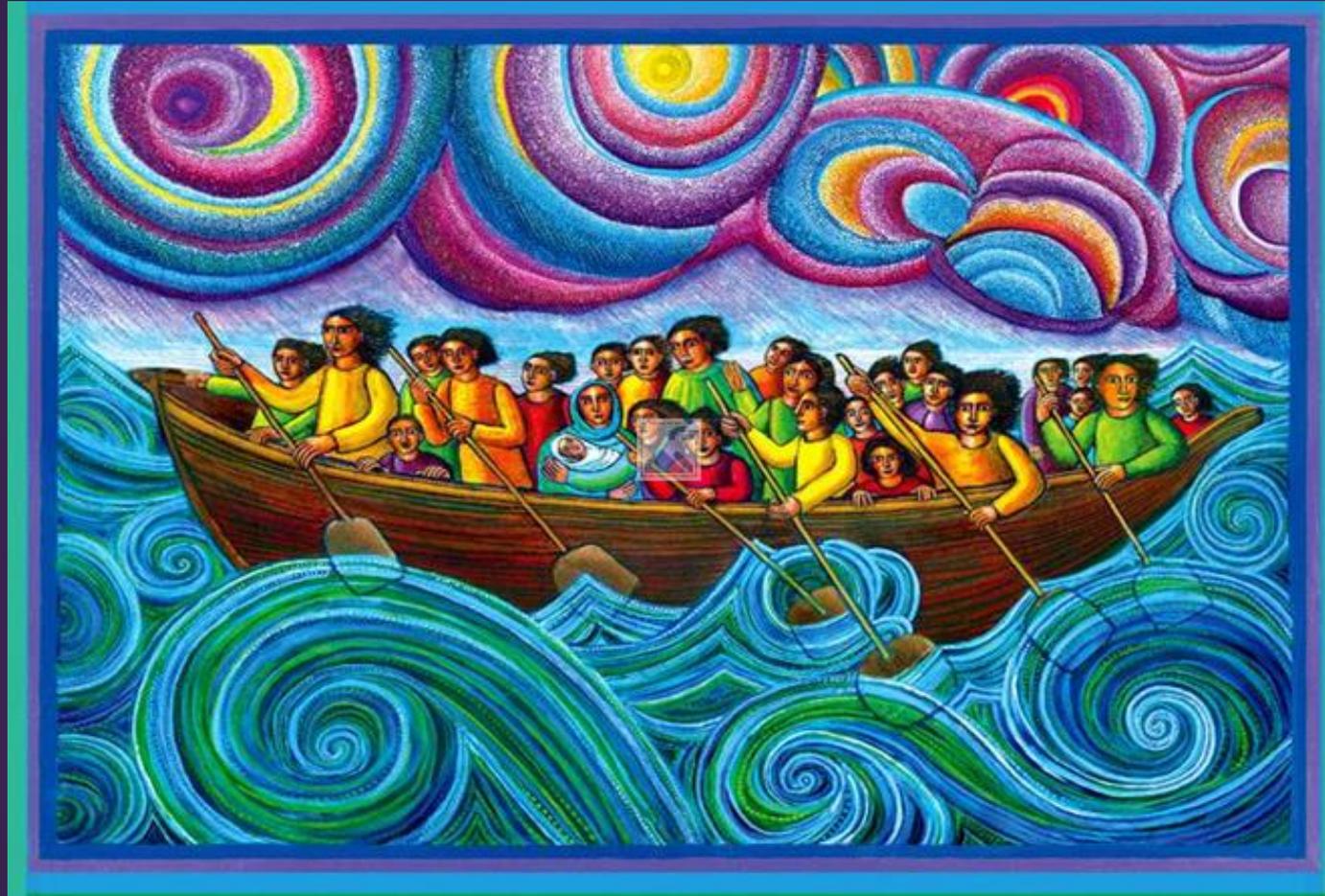
The topics listed above are from [Vandemecum For the Synod on Synodality #1.1](#) with some additions.

**LISTEN + DISCERN.** *“...Listen to God so that with him we may hear the cry of his people until we are in harmony with the will to which God calls.”* Pope Francis



“...all of this revives our sense that we are all in the same boat,  
and that one person’s problems are the problems of all.”

FT, 32, Synod documents



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*“We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. ON THIS BOAT are all of us... we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only TOGETHER can we do this.”*

*Pope Francis, March 6, 2020*



**WHO?**

**“We see throughout the Gospels how Jesus reaches out to all. He does not only save people individually but as a people that he gathers together, as the one Shepherd of the entire flock. The ministry of Jesus shows us that no one is excluded from God’s plan of salvation.”**





# Who are YOU?

**WHOEVER YOU ARE,  
WHATEVER YOU'VE DONE,  
WHEREVER YOU'VE BEEN,  
YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!**

You belong to Christ!  
You belong to Christ!





# ALL ARE WELCOME!

## Attitudes to nurture for “Synodal Process...”

- ❖ Time for sharing: Invitation to speak with courage and honesty
- ❖ Humility in listening must correspond to courage in speaking
- ❖ Dialogue leads to newness: changing opinions
- ❖ Openness to conversion and change
- ❖ Discernment: God is at work in the world; we LISTEN to the Spirit
- ❖ We must be signs of a Church that LISTENS and JOURNEYS
- ❖ Prejudices and stereotypes left behind
- ❖ Overcome the scourge of Clericalism





## The Main Question

- ❖ “A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.”
- ❖ How is this “journeying together” happening today in our parish, diocese?
- ❖ What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together?”

PD 26, Vandemecum 5.3

- ❖ **First, we journey together as the People of God.**
- ❖ **Next, we journey together as the People of God with the entire human family.**





**The BISHOP facilitates the “synodal experience”  
of the whole People of God  
on the journey toward a more synodal Church.  
He holds a key role in listening to the people of God in his Diocese.  
His involvement should foster an open dialogue  
amidst the diversity of the People of God.  
The key role of the Bishop is to listen.  
As a good shepherd for his flock, the Bishop is called  
to go before the People of God, to stand in their midst, and to follow behind,  
ensuring that no one is left out or gets lost.**

Vandemecum 4.2

### **BISHOP AUSTIN VETTER**

**“I invite the parishes of the Missoula Deanery to gather together,  
on MONDAY, MARCH 21 AT 6:30-8:30 PM AT BLESSED TRINITY,  
as we listen, learn and are heard.**

**We will begin, as we should begin everything, in prayer.**

**We invite the Holy Spirit to be among us,  
to open our ears, minds and hearts**

**to hear the movement of the Spirit in this time and place.**

**I want to hear your voice, to see and recognize you,  
as you share your story.”**

**+ Bishop Austin A. Vetter**

**“We stand before You,  
HOLY SPIRIT,  
as we gather together  
in your name...”**

