

Dear St. Leo Parishioners:

Pope Francis has called for a synod. The word “synod” means to journey together. In this synodal process, everyone around the world has been invited to listen to God’s word and reflect upon our experience as Church. This is a very exciting invitation, calling on all Catholics to respond to two questions:

**1) How is this “journeying together” happening today in our local Church (think St. Leo and/or Archdiocese)?**

**2) What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take to grow in our “journeying together?”**

We will have the opportunity to gather for listening sessions right here at St. Leo Church. This is the first time in our recollection that the Vatican has asked for such input from the laity. Let’s take full advantage of this opportunity! The results of our sessions will be sent to the archdiocese to be collated with every other parish. The Chancery summary will be sent to the USCCB. From there, there will be a country-wide report that will go to the Vatican, along with reports from countries all over the world. The results will also inform local pastoral planning efforts. Here is a link if you are interested in more information: [archseattle.org/synod](http://archseattle.org/synod).

Sister Chris and I have had the opportunity to take part in a listening session put together for the synod coordinators representing parishes around the archdiocese. It was a profound experience, enveloped in prayer, and is one we are anxious to share with all of you. May I also say that the session made us realize, once again, how blessed we are to be members of St. Leo Parish. But I digress.

You are invited and encouraged to take part in a listening session. Each session will last approximately 2 hours. We ask that you come 30 minutes prior to the start of the session to complete temperature checks, name tags, collect packets, and get settled. Masks will be required. The sessions will be held on the following days and times:

Saturday, February 26	2:30 check-in	3:00-5:00 session
Sunday, March 6	10:30 check-in	11:00-1:00 session
Thursday, March 31	9:30 check-in	10:00-12:00 session
Thursday, April 28	6:00 check-in	ZOOM session/ on-line ONLY

**It would be helpful for planning if you could notify us at least three days in advance as to which session you plan to attend. Responses can be sent to [vancebonas@aol.com](mailto:vancebonas@aol.com).** This way we will know how many tables and chairs to set up, agendas to run, refreshments to provide, etc.

Since time at each session will be limited, and we want to be sure that all have the opportunity to respond to the questions, it is highly recommended that participants take the time to pray and reflect ahead of time concerning the Synod Questions, which you will find at the end of this letter. I personally found it very helpful to write my reflections out ahead of time.

Something that was stressed in our training is that all participants will be **listening to understand, not to respond**. The key word is to “listen”. One of the trainers said the following: “Being listened to is so close to being loved that most people can’t tell the difference.” Let us come together in community and truly listen to one another, and feel the Holy Spirit move within us.

Sincerely,

*Sister Chris Still (Facilitator)*

*Kathy Vance (Coordinator)*

## Synod Questions Archdiocese of Seattle – December 2021

The fundamental questions that we are seeking answers to (per the Vatican) in the listening sessions are:

- A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together.”
- How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church?
- What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

The Vatican also provides some questions for participants to pray through in advance of listening sessions in light of the fundamental questions:

- To recall experiences: What experiences of our local Church does this question call to mind? (Stories)
- To re-read these experiences in greater depth: What joys did they bring? What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds did they reveal? What insights have they elicited?
- To gather the fruits to share: Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound? What is the Spirit asking of us? What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects for change, the steps to be taken? Where do we register a consensus? What paths are opening up for our local Church?
- To prayerfully consider answers to questions: In advance, responding succinctly to respect the goal of max participation.

### **OPENING PRAYER FOR A SYNOD GATHERING**

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 enjoy his consolations, Through Christ our lord.

Amen.