

Living Synodal Leadership: Our Call to a Unified Church

— Washington, D.C. —
September 22-23, 2022

Pre-Reading & Recommendations for Living Synodal Leadership

The Catholic Partnership Summit creates a space for Catholic leaders to address the most pressing Church leadership and management challenges and opportunities. This year's theme is **Living Synodal Leadership: Our Call to a Unified Church**. Living Synodal Leadership is a bold vision. It is how we live out our call to servant leadership and co-responsible decision-making for a healthy, thriving Church. It is actively listening to all voices, to all experiences, and embracing new, creative, and agile ways of leading in a changing world and Church. Synodal leadership employs restorative practices that move us toward healing and unity as the body of Christ. It is a willingness to regularly pause, consider, and answer the call of the Holy Spirit. It involves including those historically excluded from leadership and opening seats for them at decision-making tables. Synodal leadership offers hope, requires courage, and builds trust. It is our mission in action.

Featured speakers will address tangible ways our Church answers the call to heal, strengthen, and unify the body of Christ. Representing a diversity of voices, perspectives, and experiences, they will share how they are living synodal leadership and offer best practices for other leaders.

During the 2022 Summit, five topics that will be addressed to help renew our Church include:

- Journeying Together
- Our Synodal Roadmap
- Being One Church
- The Vital Role of Women's Leadership in the Church
- Emerging Models of Leadership and Faith in Practice.

For each of the five topics, you will find a description of the session, resources for pre-reading, reflection questions, along with recommendations for action. These recommendations represent a sample of the best practices available to our Church. We offer them to aid the discussion during the Summit, as well as in your local faith communities. Participants will be invited to lift up actionable recommendations that will support living synodal leadership. Leadership Roundtable will gather the top recommendations into a report that will be shared with the wider Church to advance the conversation.

Guiding Principles

Leadership Roundtable developed the following guiding principles for any recommendations that are considered. Recommendations should:

1. Impact the Catholic Church based on three principles: accountability, transparency, and co-responsibility
2. Shape the leadership and management culture of the Church, in line with Catholic beliefs, ecclesiology, and canon law
3. Restore trust in the Church based on measurable, visible outcomes
4. Engage both ordained and lay Catholics, working together for the mission
5. Lean forward into new possibilities
6. Be realistic and able to be translated into practical strategy and implementation

The resources in this document may also be accessed at:
summit.leadershiproundtable.org/resources

KEYNOTE: Journeying Together

Speaker: **Cardinal Mario Grech**

In October 2021, the global Catholic Church embarked on a multi-year Synodal journey together to listen to one another and collectively discern the future of the Church. As we enter the reporting phase of the Synod – where all the bishops' conferences across the world compile the results of their diocesan and parish synodal consultations – we will hear from Cardinal Mario Grech who is leading the Synod about where we are, what we've learned so far in the synodal process, and what comes next for our Church.

Resources

- **“Unprecedented” synod process moves into next phase. The Tablet, August 2022**
The Tablet reported on details of the second “continental” phase of the synod on synodality that were announced on August 26 in the Vatican, featuring important insights from Cardinal Grech.
- **‘Synod On Synodality’ Explained. December 2021**
Cardinal Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto, explains the global synodal process including logistics, history, and scripture.
- **Biblical resources on Synodality. March 2022**
A compilation of biblical resources from the Vatican Synod of Bishops Commission on Spirituality.
- **Ten Elements of Synodality. 2021**
Excerpt from Leadership Roundtable’s guide for Facilitating Synodal Consultations that presents the Ten elements of synodality set forth in the Vatican Synod handbook.
- **Bishop Flores on synodality, listening, unity. May 2022**
A 1-minute video clip of Brownsville Bishop Daniel Flores encouraging us to listen without interrupting one another

SESSION 1: Our Synodal Roadmap

Synodality is not a new concept for the Catholic Church. For years, leaders have been successfully building and utilizing synodal structures of leadership. When Pope Francis met with the Jesuits in Canada, he made the point that, “The Church is either synodal or it is not Church.” In our first session, we will explore synodal and co-responsible leadership and management, the best practices for leaders, and what synodal leadership looks like for a diocese; we will understand how synodal leadership is also rooted in the community at the parish level through schools and community life; and we will hear from a bishop about what is needed to prepare current and future lay, religious, and ordained leaders for leading in a synodal Church.

Resources

Synodality as a Leadership Best Practice

- **Give the Spirit the Mic! – A Strategy for Communal Discernment and Synodality. Discerning Leadership, May 2021**
Fr. Brian Grogan, SJ offers a detailed process to shift synodality from solely talking among ourselves about what we are to do to also engaging directly with God to learn the divine will.
- **5 parish practices for cultivating connections across generations. U.S. Catholic, August 2020**
U.S. Catholic outlines five parish practices for cultivating connections across generations and how faith communities encourage friendships outside of one’s age bubble.

Synodality in Action – General

- **Go and Witness Synodality as Graced Companions, 2022 UISG Programme for the Preparation of Formators, Concluding Ceremony. June 2022**
Sr. Roxanne Schares, Superior General of the Schools Sisters of Note Dame, shares that part of synodality is listening to God’s words in others.
- **Discernment in Common and Decision Making in a Synodal Church. June 2022**
Boston College offered a three-week online course on Building a Synodal Church. This resource represents one of the subjects covered in the course; a four-part look at discernment.

Synodality in Action – Parish and Diocesan Efforts

- **58,000 Cups of Coffee initiative fuels Synod conversations. The Catholic Messenger, Feb 2022**
The Diocese of Davenport initiated a one-on-one approach to synodal listening by encouraging conversations over a cup of coffee.
- **Final Report and Appendices: Synod for a Synodal Church, Diocese of Davenport. June 2022.**
The synthesis report of the diocesan listening sessions in the Diocese of Davenport.
- **Listening sessions yield report for international Synod. The Catholic Missourian, June 2022**
The Catholic Missourian report on the results of the Synod in the Diocese of Jefferson City.
- **Universal Synod report in San Diego. June 2022**
An example of a synthesis report of the diocesan listening sessions in the Diocese of San Diego.
- **Archdiocese of Washington: Synod Archdiocesan Synthesis Report. June 2022**
The Archdiocese of Washington’s report of its Synod proceedings.

Synodality in Action – Bishops’ Perspective

- **Bishop Frank Caggiano agrees with Pope Francis: We need a listening church.**
Jesuitical, November 2021
Bridgeport Bishop Frank Caggiano speaks to young adults about the importance of participating in the synodal process on the Jesuitical podcast.
- **Bishop McElroy: Pope Francis and Vatican II give us a road map for the synodal process.**
America Magazine, May 2022.
San Diego Cardinal Robert McElroy, explores how synodality can become a deeper element of Catholic life in the United States.
- **Holy Spirit at work in Synod discussions, discernment, Archbishop Hebda says.**
The Catholic Spirit, June 2022
The Catholic Spirit report on the Archdiocesan Synod Assembly in the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis.

Reflection Questions

1. How have you experienced synodality in our Church?
2. What are concrete ways parishes, dioceses, or Catholic organizations can be synodal in their leadership, management, and activities?
3. Why is modeling synodal leadership important for the health and vitality of the Church and how might it contribute to healthier civic participation?

Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from the above resources:

- Create a **variety of interactive spaces** for people to connect with one another and engage in dialogue and sharing about the parish, diocese, or organization.
- **Establish accountability** to utilize input from all members of the Church to generate and sustain more co-responsible leadership opportunities.
- Develop **channels of communication** that are open, accessible, frequently used, transparent, and engage all members of the Church.
- Commit to creating **multi/bilingual and culturally appropriate** ways of communicating as a parish, diocese, or organization.
- Evaluate where and how your institution’s leadership culture can **become more synodal**.
- Conduct **outreach to people who have left** the Church or no longer engage in the life of the parish to learn about their experience.

SESSION 2: Being One Church

Our Church continues to face the challenge of divisions among the body of Christ. During this session, we will address some of the divides within our Church and explore ways where parishes, dioceses and organizations are helping to successfully come together as Catholics. We will discern our collective call to build a unified Church and how we lead, manage, and build bridges that cross divides.

Resources

Our Call to Unity

- **US Bishops Launch ‘Civilize It’ - ‘a better kind of politics’.** CNA, September 2021
Catholic News Agency report that the U.S. bishops’ conference launched a new initiative to promote civility amid political polarization, appealing to Pope Francis’ 2020 encyclical *Fratelli tutti*.
- **Planning a Dialogue Within a Parish Setting.** Catholic Common Ground Initiative, 2020
The Catholic Common Ground Initiative provides a simple guide for how to engage in dialogue.
- **Keynote Address – Prophetic Voices: Being Bridges to a New Era.** May 2022
Mar Muñoz-Visoso of the USCCB’s Secretariat for Cultural Diversity in the Church offers five principles for bridge-building, as well as perspective from the V Encuentro process.
- **Investment in Hispanic Ministry is Crucial to Church’s Future.** NCR, May 2022
Article from The National Catholic Reporter highlighting core themes from the “Raíces y Alas” sixth National Catholic Congress on Hispanic Ministry.
- **The Creation of Consensus (English).** 2022
Emili Turu of Spain created this guidebook to consider what is consensus as we translate synodality into a practical way of discernment in the Church.

Unity in Leadership – A Best Practice

- **Best Practices for Shared Parishes: So That They May All Be One.** 2020
A bilingual (English and Spanish) guide to assist pastoral leaders of culturally diverse parishes to build unity, and discern pastoral planning strategies and opportunities that will lead to a higher level of stewardship through proven best practices of intercultural competencies.
- **Developing Diverse Leaders.** 2020
A one-page primer on the USCCB pastoral document “Developing Diverse Leaders: Best Practices for Shared Parishes,” which is a guide to assist pastoral leaders in culturally diverse parishes in addressing the challenging and celebrating the rewarding task of building unity in diversity.
- **Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers (English & Spanish).** 2020
A book (available for purchase) by the USCCB designed to help ministry leaders achieve a basic level of awareness and proficiency in the area of intercultural competency
- **Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers (Online Modules)**
[Module 1](#), [Module 2](#), [Module 3](#), [Module 4](#), [Module 5](#)
- **Prof. Judith Gruber on conflict and divergence management.** June 2022
Prof. Judith Gruber outlines how conflict and divergence are not mutually exclusive in the process of participation and consensus in a synodal Church.

- **Pope begins ‘pilgrimage of penitence.’ How does Indigenous Canada feel?**
Christian Science Monitor, July 2022
Reactions to and analysis of Pope Francis’ visit to Canada, which utilized the best practice of listening with indigenous individuals harmed by the Church, an important step in restorative justice and reconciliation.
- **USCCB – A Better Kind of Politics, Civilize It. 2022**
The USCCB’s official website for their “Civilize It” pledge to better politics as well as accompanying resources to help bridge political divides.

Reflection Questions

1. What did this panel discussion help you see differently? What roles do humility and curiosity place in building a unified Church?
2. What best practices have you observed in your or other organizations to bring divergent groups together?
3. What is one thing your organization could do, starting now, to unify individuals and groups in the Church?
4. Who is missing from the table, gathering, or conversation? How do we proactively work to include all members of the body of Christ in positions of leadership?

Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from the above resources:

- Identify and implement processes that **address division, promote reconciliation and healing**, and move toward unity.
- Actively **engage and listen to marginalized communities** – such as people of color, women, young adults, members of the LGBTQ community, immigrants, individuals with differing abilities, and individuals who’ve left the Church – **beyond the current Synodal process**.
- **Create spaces of encounter** for individuals to share their experiences with the Church and dialogue about existing divisions, then **seek ways to bridge what has divided** them from the Church.
- **Evaluate organizational structures**, including leadership recruitment processes, to identify and root out discriminatory or exclusionary policies and practices.
- **Train, encourage, and support leaders** to exercise leadership qualities of humility, vulnerability, openness, and curiosity.
- Seek out **experts in collaborative leadership and create avenues** such as training and formation for leaders to learn from those experts.

SESSION 3: The Vital Role of Women's Leadership in the Church

Under the papacy of Pope Francis, women have begun to serve in expanded leadership roles in the Vatican administration — from the first woman being appointed to a voting role for the Synod, to three women being elected to serve on the committee that elects bishops, and more. Those dioceses and Catholic organizations that have included women in leadership have benefited because of it. During this session, we will discuss how women's leadership is a best practice of synodal leadership and a key element of co-responsible management; discern what opportunities remain for expanding women's leadership; and highlight the vital role that women's leadership plays in a synodal Church.

Resources

Women's Leadership in the Church

- **Pope to UISG: Recognise your own vulnerability and that of others. Vatican News, May 2022**
In an address to the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), Pope Francis invited women religious to reflect on St Peter and Mary Magdalene in order to put themselves at the service of others, and encouraged them to make their own synodal journey.
- **Can women in the Vatican change the Church? Inside the Vatican Podcast, 2022**
Women are rising to new heights in the Vatican, but there is still a long way to go before women's voices and leadership are fully integrated in the Vatican. This podcast examines how things have been changing for women — and why it's difficult to have conversations about women's empowerment.
- **New Vatican constitution will create more space at the table. U.S. Catholic, May 2022**
Article in U.S. Catholic about how on March 19 Pope Francis issued a new apostolic constitution for the Roman Curia, Praedicate Evangelium (Preach the Gospel), which opened leadership of Vatican offices traditionally run by cardinals to all baptized laypersons, including women.
- **For the first time ever, Pope Francis appoints three women to the Vatican office that selects bishops. America Magazine, July 2022**
America Magazine article focusing on Srs. Raffaella Petrini, FSE, Yvonne Reungoat, FMA, and Maria Lia Zervino and their historic appointment to the Vatican commission to elect bishops.

Women's Leadership as Best Practice

- **Book Review: Former CRS head looks at women's leadership in church as taught, lived. Catholic News Service, June 2022**
A review of "Rising: Learning from Women's Leadership in Catholic Ministries" by Dr. Carolyn Y. Woo
- **'Synodality' and women's empowerment go together, leading sisters say. Crux, March 2021**
Crux spoke with several women in the Church about the upcoming Synod and they shared that synodality requires a shift in perspective and operating style, one that offers the Church a new vision and welcomes more women into leadership.

- **Talent Management Best Practices: Women in Leadership. Korn Ferry Institute, 2013**
Organizations with women in leadership are more successful, according to the Korn Ferry Institute – which focuses on global best practices in organizational leadership and human capital development. This guide from the Institute summarizes their findings around women in leadership and shares insights for organizations seeking to reduce barriers for women leaders.
- **Women’s leadership and governance in the Church. July 2022**
Sr. Joséee Ngalula of the Democratic Republic of Congo offers insight into the important role of women’s leadership during the Synod process and beyond.

Reflection Questions

1. What makes the inclusion of women in leadership essential to a thriving Church? What is one thing your organization could do, starting now, to promote women in leadership?
2. What are some of the ways of leading that women predominantly offer and how do those benefit the Church and its institutions as it addresses current challenges?
3. The Vatican recently made a major change in its leadership structure by allowing women to lead a Dicastery (Department). How can parishes, dioceses, and Catholic organizations ensure their structures reflect similar co-responsibility?

Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from the above resources:

- Identify **leadership roles in your community** where women can serve but currently do not, and appoint women to those positions.
- Actively **recruit women for leadership positions**, to pastoral and finance councils, boards of directors and trustees, and to executive positions.
- Involve women in the **training and formation of new leaders**, including ordained leaders, as a **best practice to help build a new culture** of leadership in the Church.
- Acknowledge the **unique challenges women face** as leaders in the Church and **create and support spaces** that offer women leaders connection, information sharing, and community.
- **Encourage, prepare, and mentor young women** for senior leadership roles within the Church, and **create and support pathways** to those positions.

SESSION 4: Emerging Models of Leadership and Faith in Practice

Synodality is not passive, rather it is active and intentional. Every day, organizations are living the faith, building avenues for connection, and transforming the leadership culture of the Church through restorative practices, direct services, and community building. During session 4 we will hear from leaders about the creative and timely ways Catholics are practicing leadership and faith, and learn some of the innovative emerging models that are helping the Church thrive.

Resources

Faith in Practice and Young Adults

- **OSV Challenge | OSV Institute for Catholic Innovation.**
The OSV Challenge is an entrepreneurial approach to encouraging innovation in ministry that uses a multi-round competition to accelerate unique project ideas in any stage from Catholics whose faith has motivated them to make a difference.
- **Nuns and non-religious millennials find common ground. The Detroit News, July 2019**
An article in The Detroit News about how the ministry of **Nuns and Nones** is finding ways to connect with non-religious young adults.
- **Iskali - A Thriving in Ministry Initiative of Lilly Endowment.**
Iskali has a mission to empower young Latinos with faith formation for transformative leadership.
- **Young Adult Catholics Participate in Faith-Related Groups. 2022**
An excerpt from the Winter 2022 CARA Report shows that a large portion of young adult Catholics engage in faith-related groups outside of attending Mass and that 1-in-3 young adults who infrequently attend Mass are still active in their faith outside the context of Mass. ([buy report](#))
- **Collegians and Their Church: ACCU Synod Summary. June 2022**
College students from 85 Catholic institutions across the United States took part in synodal consultations during the ongoing Synod process, results of which were provided to the USCCB.
- **Who Is My Neighbor? October 2021**
A podcast from The Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University responding to a request from Pope Francis to the Archdiocese of Washington to bring together young people to reflect and to explore how young people of faith can “rebuild our wounded world.”

Restorative Practices for a Co-Responsible Church

- **Initiative on Restorative Justice and Healing. 2021**
The University of St. Thomas Restorative Justice project was launched in 2021 to teach law students, and the broader legal community, how to utilize restorative justice practices within the courts and communities to facilitate healing, build bridges and foster a more just and inclusive society.
- **Paths of Renewed Encounter: Restorative Justice Engagement Guide. Catholic Mobilizing Network**
A restorative justice engagement guide for Catholic communities that invites individuals and groups to embrace healing approaches to crime, harm, and injustice while reflecting on the unique ways that Catholic ministries and teachings can shepherd processes that transform relationships, communities, and systems.

A New Leadership Culture –Transformation at the Universal Church Level

- [Pope Francis' reforms to church governance are unlike any since Vatican II](#). NCR, July 2022
Fr. Tom Reese, SJ details how after the reforms laid out by Pope Francis are fully implemented, the Vatican Curia will move away from its monarchical model to a collegial model put forth by the Second Vatican Council.

A New Leadership Culture – Diocesan Perspectives

- [Leadership and Teamwork in a diocese](#). July 2022
A YouTube video featuring a diocese in Colombia, South America that uses music during its synodal process to evangelize young adults.
- [Pope Francis: Why He Leads the Way He Leads](#). Thinking Faith, 2014
A book review of “Heroic Leadership” by Chris Lowney.
- [Priests as Leaders](#). Priest Magazine, January 2022
Priest Magazine article on how adaptive leadership applies to the Church in a changing world.

A New Leadership Culture –Transformation Begins Locally

- [Ask Josh: “How can we get young people back to church?”](#) July 2022
Dr. Josh Packard, executive director of Springtide Research Institute, explains that the time for asking how to get young people back to Church has long passed. The question to ask now is how can the Church reach them where they are?
- [The future of the U.S. Catholic Church is Latino](#). America Magazine, June 2022
An America Magazine article that points out the need for youth ministry for Hispanic/Latinos.
- [Hope, Healing and Hospitality: A ministry of restorative justice is growing in Chicago](#).
America Magazine, May 2022
Story from America Magazine of a ministry in Chicago that reaches out, supports and accompanies people impacted by violence and incarceration through restorative justice.
- [Index to Ministry Resources](#). Life and Leadership
An extensive list of ministry resources compiled and updated by Life and Leadership.

Reflection Questions

1. What examples of innovative methods of leadership in the Church have you observed, attempted, or are considering?
2. What supports innovation in the Church? What holds it back?
3. How do different leadership models engage people in communities of faith or turn them away?
4. What examples of innovative leadership have been successful outside of the Church that could be adopted for leadership within the Church?

Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from the above resources:

- **Support initiatives** that encourage leaders to brainstorm **creative ways to put faith into action**.
- Practice **co-responsible and synodal decision-making** within your organization as best practices for creating a leadership **culture that values innovation**.
- **Involve all stakeholders in regularly evaluating** how your organization operates and in identifying **new, innovative leadership models** that can be adopted.
- Use **innovative leadership models and faith in action** to energize Catholics, support greater involvement, meet spiritual needs, and reconnect individuals with their Catholic communities.
- Identify what **fuels innovation** within your parish, diocese, or organization and **establish the structures that eliminate barriers** and provide ongoing support.