



SYNODALITY



Knights of the Southern Cross Formation Program 2022

Session 4

A Learning Church becoming Synodal

When the term 'synodality' is applied to the Church, it is not meant to designate a mere decision-making process. It is not about collaborative decision-making that reviews alternatives, makes choices, distributes responsibilities, and carries out programs. Rather, synodality expresses a fundamental characteristic of the Church's identity: its essential communal dimension, its essential evangelising mission, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (Cardinal Michael Czerny SJ, March 2020).

Cardinal Czerny continues "For Pope Francis, the reform of the Church starts from within, that is, by virtue of a spiritual process that changes forms and renews structures. Drawing on the legacy of Ignatian spirituality, Francis emphasises the intimate connection between the inner experience, the language of faith and the reform of structures. The insight is this: not only does the Spirit *want* us to make good decisions but, through the process of synodality, the Spirit will *help* us.

During the ceremonies commemorating the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis expressed his desire for a common path for "laity, pastors, the Bishop of Rome." Now, for the first time, a "decentralised" Synod is being celebrated, although earlier the Synod was conceived by Pope Paul VI as a way to continue the collegial experience of the Second Vatican Council.

In his homily for the Synod's opening Mass, Pope Francis highlighted the fact that Jesus himself gives us a great example of listening to people he met along the way. The Pope was commenting on the gospel story about the person who asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" ([Mark 10:17-22](#) and [Luke 18:18-23](#)). Pope Francis emphasised that Jesus listened carefully to the question and spent time in responding.

"What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Bishop Paul Bird comments: "Such an important question requires attention, time, willingness to encounter others and sensitivity to what troubles them. The Lord does not stand aloof; he does not appear annoyed or disturbed. Instead, he is completely present to this person. He is open to encounter. Nothing leaves Jesus indifferent; everything is of concern to him. Encountering faces, meeting eyes, sharing everyone's history. That is the closeness that Jesus embodies. He knows that someone's life can be changed by a single encounter".

The Gospel is full of such encounters with Christ, encounters that uplift and bring healing. Jesus did not hurry along or keep looking at his watch to get the meeting over. He was always at the service of the person he was with, listening to what he or she had to say.

Jesus' listening was an important part of his service of those he met along the road. He listened carefully so that he could know their story. He could then respond to them in a way that really met their personal needs. The gospels tell us that Jesus came to serve. A key step in his serving was his listening. This is a key step for us as well. The more deeply we can listen to one another, the better we will be able to serve one another.



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And we have so many examples of Jesus our Teacher throughout the Gospels: Jesus listens to the impassioned remonstrances of the Canaanite woman (cf. *Mt* 15:21–28), who cannot accept being excluded from the blessing he brings; he allows himself to dialogue with the Samaritan woman (cf. *Jn* 4:1–42), despite her condition as a socially and religiously compromised woman; he solicits the free and grateful act of faith of the man born blind (cf. *Jn* 9), whom official religion had dismissed as outside the perimeter of grace.

The teaching of Jesus and the proclamation of the Gospel is not addressed only to an enlightened or chosen few. Jesus' interlocutor is the "people" of ordinary life, the 'everyone' of the human condition.

Questions for Discussion

1. How can all the members of the Catholic Church be more effective in proclaiming the living Jesus Christ to the world?
2. In the Knights of the Southern Cross, who are those who "walk together"? Who are those who seem further apart?
3. What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own?
4. As members of KSC how are we called to encounter with others and to grow as companions on the journey of synodality?
5. Are any groups of KSC or individuals left on the margins? Why?
6. How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore?

Prayer: So then, together, listening to the Holy Spirit, let us be led by God, as we pray

**We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather 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**