



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Journeying Together Week 1 / Question 1

Each week we will provide a sheet with the main question for the week, questions for reflection, scripture passages for your reflection and preparation, and background information. Please bring this sheet and any notes you have to your listening session. Choose whichever fits your schedule:

Session 1

Thursday, February 17

7:30-9:30pm

Zoom (if needed, call the church
before Thursday for assistance)

ID: 840 6493 9329

Passcode: 825678

301-715-8592

Session 2

Saturday, February 19

10:00am-12:00pm

Condon Hall

Session 3

Sunday, February 20

9:00-11:00am

Condon Hall

Main Question: How is God calling us to be a Christ-centered Church that “Journeys Together?”

- How is God calling us to be a Christ-centered Church that journeys together?
- At St. Ann’s, who are the ones who are actively journeying together?
- What persons or groups are left on the margins?
- As we journey together at St. Ann’s (and as a global Church), what methods do we use to discern together and make decisions?
- At St. Ann’s, across the country, and around the world, how is the Church practicing teamwork and co-responsibility?
- What actions could really help us to move forward as a Christ-centered Church that journeys together?

Galatians 3: 23-29

Before faith came, we were held in custody under law, confined for the faith that was to be revealed. Consequently, the law was our disciplinarian for Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a disciplinarian. For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendant, heirs according to the promise.

1 Corinthians 12: 1, 4-11

Now in regard to spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be unaware. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same

Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.

1 Peter 2: 1-5, 9-10

Rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, insincerity, envy, and all slander; like newborn infants, long for pure spiritual milk so that through it you may grow into salvation, for you have tasted that the Lord is good. Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. But you are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises” of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were “no people” but now you are God’s people; you “had not received mercy” but now you have received mercy.

Background on Question 1

In the context of the Catholic faith, the touchstone of inclusion is Jesus Christ, who at the Last Supper prayed for all to be one, as God is one. He includes people who have faith in him. He tells them they are never far from the Kingdom of God. He seeks people out to visit their homes. He includes people in a personal way: they touch his garment; He takes them by the hand.

Christ rose above the taboos of his time, welcoming and helping those who were outcasts in their society on the basis of sickness, poverty, or sin. He repeatedly called on his followers to welcome the poor, disabled, and sick, to provide for their needs. He welcomed women among those he taught, looked past the social blindness of his time to see the depth of their faith, and welcomed their support of him in his ministry. He welcomed the simple faith and love of children and called his followers to do the same, and to strive to emulate their faith. Christ repeatedly refused to condemn people, even where their wrongdoing offended everyone around him, but instead called these into his fold, giving them an opportunity to start again. In some cases, Christ stepped in to defend a person that others wished to condemn. Following in the footsteps of Christ, the apostles called on Christians to “welcome one another as Christ welcomed you,” to welcome strangers, not to exclude or have different standards of admission on the basis of wealth, social standing, or sex, of gifts and talents, but to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

The Church, founded by Jesus Christ, is a forum of welcome to “the great multitude from every tribe, tongue and nation.” This biblical image invites us to imagine anew the ways in which the diversity of unique gifts can contribute to an organic and authentic common building of the Church.

Some experience exclusion, isolation, and even homelessness due to cultural differences, personal characteristics, or life circumstances. An inclusive Church begins by listening and with humility, with self-examination and conversion.

A Christ-centered Church is inclusive of persons rather than of ideologies. Inclusion entails more than solidarity and accompaniment, which are grounded in creation and basic humanity. Inclusion recognizes that every person is a doorway into the mystery that is the Body of Christ. A well-meaning effort to be inclusive of one group should not result in the exclusion of another person or group.

The word “synodal” combines two Greek words that combined mean to “walk together.” Jesus’ ministry is largely spent on the road with his disciples and followers, on a long winding journey to Jerusalem. Synodality thus offers an attractive image of the way a Christ-centered Church would proceed: stepping through everyday life together with Christ. In this image, the Church is a “caravan of solidarity,” guided by Christ, and so has direction and intentionality. It is His way.

In addressing the 50th anniversary Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis thus remarked:

A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening “is more than simply hearing.” It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of truth,” in order to know what He “says to the Churches.”

While Pope Francis continues to use the word “synodal” in this way, he explores its meaning not so much as a structure as an attitude, including a “listening” connected to the “base” of the Church, a listening to people. In this sense, being synodal engages the whole community and gathers not just the bishops but all the people. Synodal describes a way of inhabiting structures. It shapes both an inclusive and a participatory culture. Jesus appointed Peter as the rock on which to build his Church, and the Spirit He sent dwells in and guides the Church, giving the Church “hierarchical and charismatic gifts.” To be synodal is to value a dynamic form of togetherness, guided by the Holy Spirit. In a synodal Church there is an openness to the Holy Spirit in a genuine process of conversion by both a humble leadership and an actively engaged community.