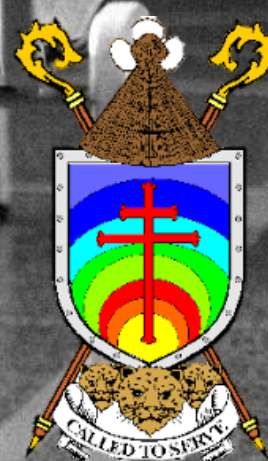


**DEAR ENGAGED & MARRIED
COUPLES, WIDOWED AND
DIVORCED MEN & WOMEN,
PARENTS (MARRIED, SINGLE,
YOUNG OR OLD), YOUTH AND
YOUNG ADULTS**

From Jan to March 2022 parishes across the Archdiocese of Johannesburg will be hosting LISTENING CIRCLES focussed on varying themes. This process involves an openness to God, taking time for prayer and adoration, and listening to what the Holy Spirit tells us. It also requires openness to others, as well as courage and "a willingness to allow ourselves to be challenged by the presence and the stories of others."

Synod
2021
2023



For a synodal Church
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THIS SYNOD POSES THE FOLLOWING FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION:

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

(Preparatory Document, 26)

IN RESPONDING TO THIS QUESTION, WE ARE INVITED TO:

- ✓ **RECALL OUR EXPERIENCES:** What experiences of our local Church does this question call to mind?
- ✓ **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?
- ✓ **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?

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IN THIS METHOD THERE ARE THREE ROUNDS OF SHARING, FOCUSED ON THE REFLECTION QUESTION. IT IS IMPORTANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT THESE ARE LISTENING CIRCLES, NOT DISCUSSION GROUPS.

THIRD ROUND: CONVERSATION WITH THE LORD

Finally in the third round participants reflect on what seems to be resonating in the conversation and what moved them most deeply. New insights and even unresolved questions are also noted. Spontaneous prayers of gratitude can conclude the conversation. Usually each small group will have a facilitator and note-taker.

Gather the fruits to share: Where, in these experiences, does the voice of the 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 particular Church?

SECOND ROUND: SHARING THE IMPACT OF WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD

In the second round, participants share what struck them most in the first round and what moved them during the time of silence. Once again this is followed by a time of silence.



FIRST ROUND: ONE AT A TIME SHARING

One at a time, each person shares the fruit of his/her experience and reflection. The others listen attentively. During this first round, there are no interactions between the participants except to ask an explanation about a word or a wording. Ask yourselves what experiences in your particular Church the fundamental question calls to mind;

Reread these experiences in greater depth: What joys did they provoke? What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds have they brought to light? What insights have they elicited?

Then, take between 3 and five minutes for silent reflection to ask yourself certain questions, such as,

- ✓ What impressed me as the others shared?
- ✓ Where did I experience deeper union with the others?
- ✓ What new insights did I gain?

FINAL STEP: PREPARING THE REPORT FOR FEEDBACK

Once the group dialogue has taken place, participants should review and share about their experience of the process within their small group. How was their experience? What were the ups and downs? What new and refreshing insights might they have discovered? What have they learned about the synodal way of proceeding? How was God present and at work during their time together? Participants should then decide on the feedback they wish to communicate to the organising/facilitation team.



Guidelines for Listening Circles



FOR GROUP MEMBERS

- i. Choose someone to be the timekeeper (See below)
- ii. Everyone is co-responsible.
- iii. Listen attentively.
- iv. Each person is the expert on his or her own experience.
- v. Share what you can, and what you want.
- vi. Share briefly and clearly.
- vii. The small group is not the place to resolve individual problems.
- viii. Times of silence are appropriate.
- ix. Respect what is confidential.
- x. Make "I" statements not "we" statements.

FOR THE TIMEKEEPER: BEFORE THE GROUP BEGINS

- i. Tell everyone at what time the group will stop
- ii. Remind them that there will be three rounds of sharing
- iii. Say how much time, approximately, each one will have for sharing during the 1st round.
- iv. Tell them that you will give a small signal with your hand to let them know when their time is almost finished.

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MARRIAGE & FAMILY LIFE

In our archdiocesan synod, we acknowledged that "education about and promotion of marriage as a sacrament" is lacking. Tied to this was the need to include traditional/cultural views of marriage. The 2019 synod also acknowledged that marriage and family life ought to be addressed as "situated in its broader socio-economic context".



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How are young people's contemporary perceptions of marriage being received, particularly that of engaged couples?

Are the pressing struggles of parents (married, single, young or old) in the face of various socio-economic and socio-political realities being considered?

How are the concrete experiences of married couples in different stages of marriage being encountered and listened to?

Which ecclesial spaces allow for encounters with and compassionate listening to the tangible and varying experiences of family life, especially those of family members who find themselves on the margins of the family?



DOES YOUR PARISH HAVE A MARRIAGE & FAMILY LIFE TEAM?

A Marriage & Family Life Team can creatively lead family ministry in your parish. If your parish does not have such a team in place, the listening circle process is a good opportunity to establish one. If and/or when your parish has or seeks to establish such a team, reach out to the MFLO. We are excited to serve and journey with your parish community. Please be on the lookout for our communication & events.





Archdiocesan Phase
Booklet



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Synod Website
(Vatican)

**HAVE YOU COMPLETED YOUR LISTENING
CIRCLES? PLEASE REPORT USING THE LINK
BELOW:**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfdx0EtWPtcKJDURZxqA0nPYh2664Q6TXI91MQt_09GBP-M6g/viewform?usp=sf link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfdx0EtWPtcKJDURZxqA0nPYh2664Q6TXI91MQt_09GBP-M6g/viewform?usp=sf_link)