

SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

Planning Guide for Parishes

Part One: Welcome, Hospitality, Outreach



ARCHDIOCESE
of NEWARK

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All Are Welcome
Br. Mickey McGrath, OSFS
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This planning booklet was prepared by the Synod on Synodality Coordinating Team to further the understanding of synodality and evangelization through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Cover Design by Gerarda Panek, OP



Introduction

Pope Francis issued an invitation to the whole Church to gather as a community of faith, to pray, listen to the Holy Spirit, and discern how the Spirit calls us to forge a way forward for the twenty-first century. In particular, he invited all into a process of *Synodality*, a way of continually gathering all to participate in listening and sharing. The priority of synodality is to find ways to connect the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, to the everyday lives of people.

The people of the Archdiocese of Newark responded enthusiastically and generously to the listening sessions to aid in preparation for the Synod on Synodality to be held in Rome in October 2024. Parishioners, families, marginalized persons, parents, catechists, and many others expressed appreciation to Pope Francis for the opportunity to dialogue, discern and be heard. A great diversity of people participated, although there is room to reach out to more through the parish, archdiocese, religious congregations, campus ministry, Catholic Charities, and more. Persons from many different cultures, ethnic backgrounds, age groups, and languages, joined together in prayer and small groups to listen and discern how the Holy Spirit is calling us to be the Church, the Body of Christ, reaching out to the world.

The Synod Consultation Process, with its emphasis on synodality, prayer, listening, discernment, and collaboration of all members through the Holy Spirit, has ignited a sense of prayer, community, and provided a way to discern together to make our archdiocese stronger in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is hoped that the listening session reports will foster even more collaboration and the use of all the members' gifts as a regular part of Church life.

In order to do this, all parishes of the Archdiocese are asked to continue the process of listening and dialogue in their parishes and other ministries by studying the Synod Listening Session Report of the Archdiocese of Newark as well as the national report from the USCCB and the initial Vatican report synthesizing reports from 103 bishops' conferences from around the world. These syntheses show many similarities in what was expressed by the faithful from different continents and cultures as well as significant insights and differences.

It is the desire of the Archdiocese of Newark that parish leadership ponder the strengths of parish ministry, the areas that need to be supported and improved, and to make concrete plans to respond to the needs of the community as indicated by feedback from their listening session report and other ministerial needs. Parish staff and parish pastoral council members along with other key leaders, have the opportunity to continue the synodal process by gathering parishioners and others to engage on how to best invite people into a life with Christ through the parish.



The Six Key Themes from the Synod on Synodality Synthesis of the Archdiocese of Newark

Six Key Themes were identified in the Archdiocese, all with additional points for specific areas for renewal. The six themes are Parish Community: Welcome, Hospitality, Outreach (Evangelization), Youth and Young Adults, Faith Formation, Participation of the Laity in Church Leadership, Governance, and Communications.

Focus on Welcome, Hospitality, and Outreach

The theme of **Welcome, Hospitality, and Outreach** in the Archdiocesan Synod on Synodality Synthesis was perceived to be an immediate need by the many parishes and groups that participated in the listening sessions, and in several ways this theme is connected to many of the five other themes. In this theme there is a strong desire for parishes and groups to reexamine how they invite and welcome all to a relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church. Many voiced the need to reach out to parishioners who no longer participate in parish, youth, young adults, divorced and remarried outside of the church, persons on the peripheries, migrants, homeless, others in need and LGBTQ persons.

How we do **Welcome, Hospitality, and Outreach** effects all our parishes, ministries, organizations, institutions from the way we answer the phone, engage with folks one-one-one, and invite all to community, discipleship, and ministry. Many communities have established a welcome ministry and reach out to a great number of people in multiple ways. Others are looking at their welcoming and outreach practices and strengthening their plans.

The suggestion is that in the archdiocese we begin with this first theme of Welcome, Hospitality, and Outreach since this is a critical concern at this point in time. To aid thinking creatively about this theme, this pastoral planning resource will guide you through the first key theme in the Archdiocese of Newark synthesis and assist you in creating ongoing dialogue and listening to discern a plan, a way forward for the areas that need attention in your parish. The theme of **Welcome, Hospitality and Outreach**, is a great place to begin. The purpose of this planning guide is to offer questions to help you think through the many areas impacted by **Welcome, Hospitality and Outreach**, so that you can form a plan to reach out to all in your parish area and the local community.



A Message from Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, CSsR

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I want to say thank you to the many people of our Archdiocese who came together to listen to what the Holy Spirit may be saying to the Church (cf. Rev. 3:22).



In October 2021 Pope Francis invited the entire Catholic community – all 1.2 billion of us! – as well as other Christians, religious traditions, and people of good will to engage in a world-wide consultation. It was an extraordinary experience to participate in a “listening Church” which is attentive to the Holy Spirit to live in **communion**, with full **participation** of the baptized in order to carry out the **mission** that has been entrusted to us by Jesus Christ.

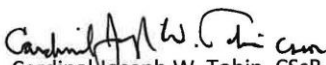
The experience of being a “listening Church” continues. I heard from many people of our Archdiocese regarding the successes as well as challenges facing our Church. I think we all want to ensure that what has been prayerfully discerned does not get lost, and we hope to hear from people who may not have had the opportunity to be engaged in the initial round of listening sessions.

So, I am asking our parishes and ministries across the Archdiocese to concentrate on the first key theme in the summary report of the initial gathering: **Welcome, Hospitality and Outreach**. This theme emerged in the reports from most parishes and other listening sessions. Many of our communities in the Archdiocese are presently reaching out and asking what is working and what needs to be improved in the areas of welcome, hospitality and outreach. We encourage all to take up this theme and assess their efforts.

The Synod Planning Team has prepared a series of gatherings that continue the process of praying together, listening, and discerning the way forward. The meetings will follow this planning guide on the key theme of **Welcome, Hospitality and Outreach**. I ask that our parishes, schools, apostolates, and other organizations of the Archdiocese utilize the guide to continue developing plans to reach out with the Good News of Christ.

We ask God’s continued blessing on our efforts as we move forward in faith together!

Mary Mother of the Church, pray for us.


Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, CSsR
Archbishop of Newark



How to Use this Planning Resource

Who Uses the Planning Guide?

The Pastor with the Pastoral Staff, Parish Pastoral Council, Parish Finance Council, and other key ministry leaders will come together and assess the areas of parish life and practice in the light of Welcome, Hospitality and Outreach. This guide can also be used to assist schools, religious congregations, archdiocesan pastoral ministries and apostolates, and others.

Begin with Prayer and Scripture

Prayer is an essential part of the planning process. It is good to begin each session with some quiet reflection, prayer and faith sharing, praying to the Holy Spirit for guidance and insight so that you can take *“a long, loving look at the real”** in your parish or ministry. This will assist you in reflecting on what you already do in the parish in this area and what you can improve. Jesus wanted people to see things in a new light. He asks the disciples to see a new vision as they traveled and ministered with him. Today the Holy Spirit asks us to look again at the vision and mission of Jesus and continually find ways to make his message clear in our time. (Sample prayer on page 6.)

Reflecting on the theme: Welcome, Hospitality and Outreach

Read over the theme and the eight bullet points to see the particular areas that were of concern in the synod synthesis. To better work with these, the planning guide has reflection questions to assist you in thinking through various aspects and possibilities of welcome, hospitality and outreach in each of these areas. Hopefully, this will generate conversation and ideas to better reach out to all.

After each section, there is a chart to focus you on next steps. The chart will help you think through what are the priorities that you want to explore further.

At the end of the questions, you are asked to look back over your reflection questions and priorities and then choose the most critical areas to work on over the next 18 months to three years. Each of those priorities become a goal and from there you will determine specific objectives and strategies to meet the need that you identified.

This is a method for pastoral planning through which you will follow a specific path to keep the parish moving forward and growing. Again remember, that prayer, listening and discernment will build a strong community dedicated to the mission of Christ and his Church.

* *Reverend Walter J. Burghardt, SJ*



Be doers of the word and not hearers only

Gathering Prayer

Leader Ever loving God,
We long for you.
Let us hear your voice
as we reflect on your goodness to us this day.

All Amen

Scripture [James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27](#)

Dearest brothers and sisters:
All good giving and every perfect gift is from above,
coming down from the Father of lights,
with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change.
He willed to give us birth by the word of truth
that we may be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

Humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you
and is able to save your souls.

Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves.

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this:
to care for orphans and widows in their affliction
and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Reflection with Another

- + How has the “Word planted in you” sustained you in life and ministry?
- + In what ways is your parish or ministry a source of life and light for you?
- + In what ways can you be a “doer of the Word” to share the life and light of Jesus with others?

Prayer

Leader Loving Lord,
You proved yourself as a leader in your ministry.
As ministers devoted to your people,
help us to be good listeners and visionaries,
seekers to find what your people of our parish need to grow,
and to further your mission in our parish and beyond.

All Do not let us get mired in petty details and things that distract and detract.
Rather, let us focus on shining the light to welcome all.
We pray that our efforts may bear much fruit today and into the future.
We ask this in your name. Amen



Archdiocese of Newark Synod on Synodality

Key Theme One

PARISH COMMUNITY: WELCOME, HOSPITALITY, OUTREACH (EVANGELIZATION)

In the synod reports, the need to reach out and welcome all was a significant priority. Some of the key points raised were:

1. Find ways to invite people back to the parish and build a strong community.
2. Reach out to those on peripheries and those who are marginalized, which includes youth, young adults, and those with children in religious education.
3. Do a better job at welcoming all people: divorced and remarried, LGBTQ, persons with disabilities, immigrants, varied cultural groups and others in our communities. Many noted the desire to bring cultural and language groups together as one parish.
4. Continue to promote social justice and social outreach. These are essential in many parishes. Ministries such as outreach to refugees, health clinics, food pantries, homebound, etc., are thriving well in many parishes, but need to seek ways to serve more people.
5. Continue to recognize parish ministries and how important they are in engaging parishioners as disciples. Many parishes described the fact that it is time to invite more people, particularly young adults and teens, to participate in formal ministries in light of their baptismal call.
6. Be missionary and reach out in joy to new and estranged members.
7. Encourage members to be missionary disciples, committed to the work of evangelization.
8. Build vibrant communities which care for and accompany its members.

The following questions will help you get started.

Questions for Reflection, Discernment, and Discussion

1. **Find ways to invite people back to the parish and build a strong community.**

Welcome and Invitation

- What does it mean to be welcomed? Remember a time when you felt welcomed.
- How do you currently welcome people into your community?
- Describe the members of your parish who are active, in particular think about the different generations.

- Who do you want to be a part of your parish? Why?
- What have been successful ways that you reach out to parishioners?
- What are ways that you reach out to those who are no longer attending Mass or parish events? What more could you do?
- What assistance do you need to reach out to those who are not attending the parish?

As a result of our discussion, we want to accomplish:

Priority WHAT do you need to do and WHY?	Action Steps How will you accomplish it?	Point Person Who will lead?	Timeframe When will you begin and proposed date for completion?	Resources needed Personnel and financial	Evaluation How will you measure success?

2. Reach out to those on peripheries and those who are marginalized, which includes youth, young adults, and those with children in religious education.

Inviting Youth into Parish Life and Ministry

- Consider different generations or groups in your community. As an example, you may decide on a focus on inviting Youth into parish life and ministry. *(Note that youth and young adults was also the second theme mentioned in the Archdiocesan Synod Report.)*
- What are specific ways that you invite youth into parish life? What more could you do?
- How will you find out what they need and want from the parish?
- What do you offer them? What can they be involved in? What more could you do?

- What assistance do you need to be able to reach out to youth and invite them into the life of the parish?

As a result of our discussion, we want to accomplish:

Priority WHAT do you need to do and WHY?	Action Steps How will you accomplish it?	Point Person Who will lead?	Timeframe When will you begin and proposed date for completion?	Resources needed Personnel and financial	Evaluation How will you measure success?

Inviting Young Adults into Parish Life and Ministry

- What are specific ways that you invite young adults into parish life? (Many are parents of children who bring their children for religious education.)
- How will you find out what they need and want from the parish?
- What do you offer them? What can they be involved in? What more could you do?
- What assistance do you need to be able to reach out to young adults and invite them into the life of the parish?

As a result of our discussion, we want to accomplish:

Priority WHAT do you need to do and WHY?	Action Steps How will you accomplish it?	Point Person Who will lead?	Timeframe When will you begin and proposed date for completion?	Resources needed Personnel and financial	Evaluation How will you measure success?

- 3. Do a better job at welcoming all people: divorced and remarried, LGBTQ, persons with disabilities, immigrants, varied cultural groups and others in our communities. Many noted the desire to bring cultural and language groups together as one parish.**

Those on the Margins and Peripheries

- Who are the people considered “on the margins/peripheries” in your parish?
- How do you identify them? How will you find out what they need and want from the parish?
- As a parish, what do you have to offer to those who feel they are not fully accepted?
- What more could you do?
- What assistance do you need to be able to recognize and reach out to those on the peripheries?

As a result of our discussion, we want to accomplish:

Priority WHAT do you need to do and WHY?	Action Steps How will you accomplish it?	Point Person Who will lead?	Timeframe When will you begin and proposed date for completion?	Resources needed Personnel and financial	Evaluation How will you measure success?



4. Continue to promote social justice and social outreach. These are essential in many parishes. Ministries such as health clinics, food pantries, and outreach to homebound and refugees, etc., are thriving well in many parishes, but need to seek ways to serve more people.

Social Justice and Outreach

- What types of social justice and social outreach are critical in your parish? Describe whether they are primarily activities of almsgiving, volunteering or advocacy.
- In what ways do you invite or engage parishioners or your local community in these efforts?
- Who are those most in need in your community or deanery and how do you identify them?
- What are your direct service (outreach) methods? What more could you do?
- What are your advocacy efforts? (Advocacy means efforts aimed at influencing public attitudes, policies, and laws to create a more just society.) What more could you do?
- What assistance do you need to be able to strengthen your social ministry efforts?

As a result of our discussion, we want to accomplish:

Priority WHAT do you need to do and WHY?	Action Steps How will you accomplish it?	Point Person Who will lead?	Timeframe When will you begin and proposed date for completion?	Resources needed Personnel and financial	Evaluation How will you measure success?

5. Continue to recognize parish ministries and how important they are in engaging parishioners as disciples. Many parishes described the fact that it is time to invite

more people, particularly young adults and teens, to participate in formal ministries in light of their baptismal call.

Recognize and Promote Ministries

- List your ministries under the following categories: Word, Worship, Community, Service, Leadership. This can help you have an idea of the many ministries you have in these areas and can begin the discussion of how to appreciate the ministries and invite new people to join.
- How does the parish support ministries? How do you train people to take on roles in ministry?
- When you look at the various ministries, what jumps out at you? Think about which ministries are most effective, which ones might no longer be needed, and which would be important for the parish today. Make a list of Very Important, Kind of Important, Less Important.
- How would you go about renewing and making the ministries vital? What might be needed to energize or focus ministries?
- Think about if there are new ministries needed in the parish? What might they be? Who might they serve or attract?
- What are ways that ministries could reach out and invite new members? How do you encourage new parishioners to join ministries?
- What assistance do you need to welcome and form people as disciples in ministry?

As a result of our discussion, we want to accomplish:

Priority WHAT do you need to do and WHY?	Action Steps How will you accomplish it?	Point Person Who will lead?	Timeframe When will you begin and proposed date for completion?	Resources needed Personnel and financial	Evaluation How will you measure success?

6. Be missionary and reach out in joy to new and estranged members.

- Would you describe your parish as a joyful community? Why or why not? Describe.
- Who are those who are estranged from or no longer participate in your parish community? Please list who you are missing.
- What are ways that you could reach out to connect with those who are no longer a part of the parish?
- What assistance might you need to reach out to those who are no longer a part of the parish?

As a result of our discussion, we want to accomplish:

Priority WHAT do you need to do and WHY?	Action Steps How will you accomplish it?	Point Person Who will lead?	Timeframe When will you begin and proposed date for completion?	Resources needed Personnel and financial	Evaluation How will you measure success?

7. Encourage members to be missionary disciples, committed to the work of evangelization.

- How would you describe the level of understanding of being a disciple of Christ for your parish?
- In what ways do parishioners demonstrate discipleship?

- What do you do to form and support parishioners as disciples and reach out to others with the Good News of Jesus?
- What assistance might you need to form and support parishioners as disciples and reach out to others with the Good News of Jesus?

As a result of our discussion, we want to accomplish:

Priority WHAT do you need to do and WHY?	Action Steps How will you accomplish it?	Point Person Who will lead?	Timeframe When will you begin and proposed date for completion?	Resources needed Personnel and financial	Evaluation How will you measure success?

8. Build vibrant communities which care for and accompany its members.

The definition of Vibrant in the *Cambridge English Dictionary* is energetic, bright, and full of life or excitement. Thinking about this:

- How vibrant is your parish?
- What might help the parish be more vibrant?
- In what ways do you care for and accompany people in their spiritual journey when parishioners need support and pastoral care?
- What are the significant life moments when people need accompaniment? Make a list of significant moments and events and note how you are ministering to them. For example: parents who bring their children for Baptism, couples preparing for marriage, persons who have lost a loved one, etc.
- In what ways can you strategically strengthen ministries in these and other areas?

- What assistance might you need to assess your ministry to people in key life moments?

As a result of our discussion, we want to accomplish:

Priority WHAT do you need to do and WHY?	Action Steps How will you accomplish it?	Point Person Who will lead?	Timeframe When will you begin and proposed date for completion?	Resources needed Personnel and financial	Evaluation How will you measure success?

Appendix

Synod Prayer



SYNOD PRAYER for the ARCHDIOCESE of NEWARK

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. Amen.

FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH

COMMUNION ● PARTICIPATION ● MISSION



Oración por el Sínodo

Estamos ante ti, Espíritu Santo,
reunidos en tu nombre.

Tú que eres nuestro verdadero consejero:
ven a nosotros,
apóyanos,

entra en nuestros corazones
Enséñanos el camino,

muéstranos cómo hacer avanzar a nuestra Iglesia,
y cómo invitar a nuestras hermanas y hermanos a
trabajar juntos para vivir el Evangelio
de una manera más plena en nuestro tiempo.

No permitas que la ignorancia
nos lleve por falsos caminos
ni influya en nuestras acciones.

Que encontremos en ti nuestra unidad
para que podamos caminar juntos
y no nos desviemos del camino
de la verdad y la justicia.

Te pedimos una bendición especial
para la Iglesia de Newark.

Que apreciemos esta oportunidad
de orar, escuchar y discernir
para que podamos continuar la misión de Cristo
como discípulos misioneros.

Esto te lo pedimos a ti,
que obras en todo tiempo y lugar,
en comunión con el Padre y el Hijo
por los siglos de los siglos.

Amén.

POR UNA IGLESIA SINODAL

COMUNIÓN ● PARTICIPACIÓN ● MISIÓN