



GUIDE FOR CONVERSATIONS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

Matthew 13:31–32

During preparations for our Synodal journey, people have asked for questions they could use with family and friends and in particular children and grandchildren, to explore their views. We have prepared a few broad questions that we would encourage you to share and discuss, but which can also be filled in online if people prefer to respond individually.

The following are some reflections that we hope you might find helpful in approaching these conversations:

- ❖ Before you open a conversation take some time and really pray for the person you are speaking to. We have suggested a prayer below. If possible, invite people to join in with your prayer and to share a moment of silent reflection.
- ❖ Plan your conversation – it is always better to invite someone to join at a time that suits them.
- ❖ Unconditional love is crucial in any relationship inspired by Gospel values and the Holy Spirit. It is important that the conversation does not suggest that we strongly disapprove of anyone's decisions. Our goal is to listen and understand and not to judge.
- ❖ People will not open up about their opinions and fears if they worry that they are going to be judged, laughed at or told off. It is important to create a supportive environment where people are not worried about getting things wrong or causing offence.
- ❖ We must genuinely listen and not jump in with responses. It might be worth considering in advance how you will feel and react if the answers to your questions contain criticisms of God or the Church and its beliefs. One approach would be to acknowledge the other persons feelings, welcome their doubts and criticisms and let people them know they are not judged, but listened to. (There will be plenty of time for discussion and responding in future conversations)
- ❖ Listen more than you talk. Allow the other person freedom to express their feelings, even if it's anger at God. The moment you begin to tell someone how they should feel the conversation is likely to dry up.
- ❖ At the end of the conversation, you might reflect back in a respectful and non-judgemental way what you have learned about that person's views on the faith or the Church. Try to end on a positive note.



This Synodal Walking Together is not a one-off exercise but part of a new way of listening to the Holy Spirit and to each other. You might wish to reflect on what you will do differently in your faith life and family relationships after going through this conversation.

Synodal Prayer

Holy Spirit, make Yourself at home in our hearts

Holy Spirit, we are gathered in the name of Jesus.

As his gift to us, guide us; make Yourself at home in our hearts, our homes, and churches.

You who fill the world, Holy Spirit, fill our minds and hearts.

Show us the way you desire to renew the Church and give us courage to walk it.

Let us find our way to harmony and unity, truth, and self-knowledge

May we run the way together to a renewed and relevant church in the world and to eternal life.

Amen.

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¹ <http://www.prayforthesynod.va/en/>