

Synod on Synodality Examen

(Lightly adapted from “Centering Examen” by Linh Nguyen of the Center for FaithJustice)

Please find a comfortable position, close your eyes if you prefer, and feel free to turn off your video if that will help you enter into a space of prayer. Let us take a moment to just be who we are before God... God calls us to show up just as we are, however we are able, and to trust that God will meet us there....

Let us pray... In the name of Love, the Beloved, and the Love that flows between. Amen.

Ask God for insight

Holy Wisdom, we ask that you enter into this important conversation with us tonight. Help us be courageous, open, and vulnerable, so that we are able to take a compassionate and honest look at how we journey together to more fully become the church you call us to be.

Gratitude

Think of a life-giving memory that you’ve had with a faith community in your life. Let yourself come back to this moment and allow whatever details you can remember to arise to the surface – people, circumstances, feelings. Where is God in this memory? Take a moment to offer thanks for this memory.

Review

I invite you to tap into your imagination...When you hear the word “church”, what comes to mind? How do you ‘recognize’ church? What is the truest image, memory, or feeling that you have that defines what church means to you?

As you think over your own personal journey with your church community, however you define it...

- What has offered you true joy?
- How do your sense of church and your own faith life interact? In what ways has one challenged the other?
- What emotions do you most readily identify with your experience of church?

Facing Shortcomings

I invite you to lean into the full reality of our church today.

Where have you experienced hurt, discouragement, or disappointment on this journey?

As people of God and one human family, where do we neglect to accept, empower, and encourage all of our members?

Has your experience of church ever made you feel more distant from God? How so?

At this point in our prayer, I invite you to allow the experiences to fade away gently, and ask yourself, how am I feeling? Whatever it is – express those feelings to God, who welcomes them lovingly.

Looking toward the future

Looking back on the experiences that you've had with your church community, what individuals, movements, or voices bring you a sense of hope or inspire you to take action to respond to the needs of the world? ... Where has your church community called you out of your comfort zone?

Think about what a church that welcomes, empowers, and accompanies all God's people would look like:

- Where do you see yourself fitting into this church that you imagine?

What are you called to bring to this conversation tonight? How are you being called to listen?

- What grace might you need to listen with your whole heart this evening?

Take a moment to ask God to open your heart to ways that you are being invited to reflect on and respond to the needs of our church and the global community, especially those on the margins.

Holy Spirit, you are the breath enlivening the people of God. Guide us to lovingly offer the gifts we have in service to the kin-dom of God. May we know once again that we are not isolated beings but connected and belonging, in mystery and miracle, to God, to the People of God, and to each other. Amen.