

Synod on Synodality

Fundamentals for Listening

- ① Set guidelines at the beginning of the session. Facilitators should introduce themselves. Others can introduce themselves, if they choose, when it is their turn to speak.
- ② Be sure to tell everyone at your "listening session" that each person will have an opportunity to speak. Everyone else will simply listen without criticism or defensiveness. It is **very important that people do not comment**. The sessions are not intended to be conversations, but times for heart-felt listening. Each person should speak about what is on their mind and heart and not use their speaking time to comment on another person's experience, but to speak mindfully of their own experiences. Some of these expressions might be positive, some might be negative. That's ok. Remember, criticism and defensiveness are anxious forms of relating. In a non-anxious setting, everyone listens and hears the other. Create a peaceful environment.
- ③ No one should take notes when people are speaking. It is recommended that each table have a note-taker with notes taken when a person is done speaking. Consider a moment of silence.

A - Ask: If you could speak with Pope Francis personally, what would you talk about?

L - Listen: We are called to be active listeners, seeking to understand with the knowledge that each person has been created in the image of God. Listening requires self-awareness, as we all have our own strong opinions on various issues. When we listen with our heart, people perceive they are being heard, not judged: they feel free to recount their own experiences and their spiritual journey.

O - Observe: Sometimes people speak non-verbally. Be aware of this fact, but everyone should refrain from commenting. Simply pay attention to the whole person. Avoid any type of negative reactions to what is observed or said. Ours is not to judge, but to be an instrument of peace.

H - Hear with your Heart: Understanding requires compassion. We may not agree with 90% of what is being said.

A - Ask again, if what is said is not understood. You might need to ask the speaker, "tell me if I got this right" to be sure the note-taker understands clearly the message. Never ask "why?" It is an endless question. "A" can also stand for "apologize." If someone has been wounded, the facilitator can be an instrument of healing by simply saying, "I am sorry."

Thoughtful questions or comments, if necessary, are suggested such as: "I am listening."
"I'd like to know the thoughts behind that feeling." "What was the significance of that for you?"
"I am sure you are not alone in that opinion."

S.O.S. - Have an emergency contact available for a serious issue. See Resource guide.
Understand Mandatory Reporting issues.



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission