In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

*The Synodal prayer*

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.

Answering the invitation of Pope Francis we, as one Church, want to ponder on the Word of God to renew the face of the Church. We do it because we are responsible for the Church as well as we want to know it better and deeper. With open hearts we can all learn something new especially how to listen to the Holy Spirit and one another. The synodal process is first a spiritual process. In the quietness of our heart, before we speak, we listen to the Holy Spirit and recognize what He says to us as a community.

May the Word of God inspire our thinking about our Mother Church. Let us open our hearts and remove from us our private vision of the Church. May every single word that comes from us be the voice of the Holy Spirit.

At the beginning we recall the words our parents or we ourselves said during our baptism.

*Renunciation of sin*

- Do you renounce sin, so as to live in the freedom of the children of God?
  - I do.
- Do you renounce the lure of evil, so that sin may have no mastery over you?
  - I do.
- Do you renounce Satan, the author and prince of sin?
  - I do.

*Profession of faith.***

- Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and Earth?
  - I do.
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered death and was buried, rose again from the dead and is seated at the right hand of the Father?
  - I do.
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?
I do.

This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

Our first reading comes from the Acts of the Apostles. It describes the Day of Pentecost. We are the witnesses of the beginning of the Church. The word of Jesus Christ, who said that His disciples will be baptized in the Holy Spirit are fulfilled. The Holy Spirit from the beginning of the Church is the initiator and warrant of the effectiveness of all actions undertaken by the Apostles. It is the Holy Spirit who makes the Apostles the true witnesses of Christ. Reading this part of the Acts of the Apostles lets us think about what we can do if we fully open ourselves to the grace of the Spirit that Jesus sent us.


When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.”

This is the Word of God.

Psalm 104

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

O LORD, my God, you are great indeed!

How manifold are your works, O Lord!

the earth is full of your creatures;

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.
May the glory of the LORD endure forever;  
may the LORD be glad in his works!  
Pleasing to him be my theme;  
I will be glad in the LORD.  

R. **Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.**  

If you take away their breath, they perish  
and return to their dust.  
When you send forth your spirit, they are created,  
and you renew the face of the earth.  

R. **Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.**  

Our second reading tells us that every society is built by people that have different vocations. We see this as well in the Church. Giving us the grace of faith, God prepares for us a particular place among the disciples of Christ. He also gives us the special assistance of His Spirit, who makes our mission possible to fulfill. Sometimes this special assistance of the Third Person of God, we call Charism, it is a gift that one can use to serve the community. Unfortunately, we see it often in a human way that one with charism can be seen as more important. This was the same way people looked at each other in the first community of the Church in Corinth where people quickly divided themselves into different groups and became rivals to each other, forgetting that the faith in Christ should unify not divide. Paul, writing his letter to Corinthians is using a beautiful vision of the human body. In one body everything works in harmony. If there is no harmony the body suffers. Every single part of the body is needed. It is the same with every baptized person. The church needs every single one of us.  

*A reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.*  

Brothers and sisters:  

*No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.*  

*There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.*  

*To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.*  

*For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.*  

*This is the Word of God.*
Our last reading is taken from the Gospel of Luke. The death of Jesus on the cross shook the faith of the Apostles. Although Jesus had spoken many times about His death, the Apostles seemed to be completely unprepared. Two of them decided to leave Jerusalem. On the way to Emmaus, they experienced something unexpected. The Resurrected Jesus joined them; however, they did not recognize Him. Their Master patiently was explaining to them the writings so they could understand what happened. Eventually they recognized Him while they saw Him breaking the bread. The reading tells us where Jesus can be met and recognized. It also tells us that He takes care of everyone, even of those who are trying to find their own way. The Word of God and the Sacraments allow us to follow Jesus in one community.


Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, “What are you discussing as you walk along?” They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?” And he replied to them, “What sort of things?” They said to him, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see.” And he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.” So, he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?” So, they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!” Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.
Now, having the Word of God in our hearts, and being guided by the Holy Spirit, we want to dialog in our families or if we are by ourselves, we want to deeply ponder how we can take care of our Church. May the temptation of focusing only on our own personal business be rejected. Instead, may we be enlightened and see the challenges of the entire Church.

Let us consider the following Synodal suggestions given to us by the Pope while creating our own personal suggestions for the Church.

1. COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY In the Church and in society we are side by side on the same road. In our local Church, who are those who “walk together”? Who are those who seem further apart? How are we called to grow as companions? What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

2. LISTENING is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice. How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore? How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people? What facilitates or inhibits our listening? How well do we listen to those on the peripheries? How is the contribution of consecrated men and women integrated? What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own? What space is there for the voice of minorities, especially people who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?

3. SPEAKING OUT All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity. What enables or hinders speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in our local Church and in society? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us? How does the relationship with the local media work (not only Catholic media)? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?

4. CELEBRATION “Walking together” is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist. How do prayer and liturgical celebrations inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community? How do they inspire the most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy? What space is given to participating in the ministries of lector and acolyte?

5. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate. Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptized person called to participate in the mission of the Church? What hinders the baptized from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting? How does the community support its members who serve society in various ways (social and political involvement, scientific research, education, promoting social justice, protecting human rights, caring for the environment, etc.)? How does the Church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way? How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?
6. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding. To what extent do diverse peoples in our community come together for dialogue? What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church? How do we promote collaboration with neighboring dioceses, religious communities in the area, lay associations and movements, etc.? How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed? What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to? What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation? How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the spheres of politics, economics, culture, civil society, and people who live in poverty?

7. ECUMENISM The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey. What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? What do we share and how do we journey together? What fruits have we drawn from walking together? What are the difficulties? How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

8. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church. How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice? How are evaluations conducted and by whom? How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted? Have we had fruitful experiences of synodality on a local level? How do synodal bodies function at the level of the local Church (Pastoral Councils in parishes and dioceses, Presbyteral Council, etc.)? How can we foster a more synodal approach in our participation and leadership?

9. DISCERNING AND DECIDING In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community. What methods and processes do we use in decision-making? How can they be improved? How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures? Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God? What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice? What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability? How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?

10. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation, and on-going learning. How does our church community form people to be more capable of “walking together,” listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue? What formation is offered to foster discernment and the exercise of authority in a synodal way?

(After saying and writing your suggestions let us pray at the end with the words our Lord taught us.)

Our Father…..

(If we did this celebration with the family, father or mother blesses everyone.)

May Almighty God bless you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.