

## Pope Francis Opens the Synod that can Change the Catholic Church

By now you have probably heard about the Synod on Synodality – either at Mass, at school, or in the media.

Put simply, this momentous initiative of our universal Catholic Church is about ***how do we learn to listen and walk together and that every baptised person participates actively in the life of the church.***

On Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, the Pope opened the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

The October 4-29 gathering inside the Vatican is just the first of two sessions of what is commonly called the "Synod on Synodality". It will be followed up by another session in October of next year.

This initial meeting will include more than 400 participants (including 15 religious and lay persons from Australia) and, for the first time in the Synod of Bishops' fifty-eight-year history, more than 50 women and a number of other laypersons will be full voting members.

Catholics are staking a lot of hope on these two gatherings, which will culminate a three-year process the pope launched in October 2021. The object has been to involve all the people of God in a series of conversations at the local, national and regional levels on the future of the Church.

Nothing is off the agenda for discussion. The extraordinary process of consultation and discernment leading up to this week's first assembly in Rome is detailed in a single document called *Instrumentum Laboris*. A set of 15 questions have also been prepared that provide the agenda for the First Assembly.

Pope Francis said the Catholic Church needed to be rebuilt to make it a place of welcome for "everyone, everyone, everyone."

On the eve of a three-day spiritual retreat for participants in the assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis prayed that members of the Church may embrace silence to listen to the voice of God and one another. This was a very moving ecumenical gathering in St Peter's Square.

### Stay involved with what's going on with the Synod in Rome

There are multiple sources online for finding out more about the lead up to the First Assembly and to keep up with up-to-the-minute reports of what's going on with the Synod in Rome.

Here are just a few....

Vatican Official Synod website – you will find all documents and links to daily updates <https://www.synod.va/en.html>

Vatican radio 'Fraterna Domus' - Part 1. XVI General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops- retreat meditations for Synod participants by Rev Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP

e.g. First Meditation - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGdxwE2KYgg>

Catholic Church Reform - you will find *Spirit Unbounded* events, *Vatican Briefing Podcasts*, and *Vatican press releases* of the daily reflections of what the Synod delegates are discussing. [www.CatholicChurchReformIntl.org](http://www.CatholicChurchReformIntl.org)

Melbourne Catholic Archdiocese website – recent informative articles include:

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/before-synod-retreat-pope-prays-for-listening-instead-of-polarisation>

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/8-things-to-know-about-octobers-synod-on-synodality-in-rome>

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/pope-promotes-safe-space-for-synod-participants>

The Gospel calls us to be a church of service to the world.