



For a Synodal Church:

communion | participation | mission

CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR HOLIDAY FAMILY GATHERINGS

Pope Francis has invited us to listen to one another, share our experiences, and dream about the future of the Church as part of the upcoming Synod of Bishops. It's for everyone – not just practicing Catholics.

Are you being called to give a voice to someone who might not otherwise participate in this process? During the holidays, you may encounter a friend or family member willing to have a conversation with you about their faith journey and experiences in the Church. We hope you will consider taking this opportunity to listen to their stories with an open mind and heart.

Before your conversation, ask the Holy Spirit to help you to know when and how to begin, to guide your words, to help you see with His eyes and love with His heart. Say the prayer below or speak from your heart.

**Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.
Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.**

-Holy Spirit Prayer of Saint Augustine

Think about your own perceptions and assumptions before you begin the conversation. Simply listen with an open heart. Be non-judgmental in your words, actions, and posture. Try to imagine yourself in the other person's shoes.

You may want to begin like this: *"Pope Francis has asked everyone in the Church to spend time listening to one another and sharing our experiences of Church. Would you be open to a conversation? The goal is listen to one another, learn from our experiences, and identify ways that we can move forward together as Church."*

Here are some questions to get you started:

- *What is one of your favorite memories of the Catholic Church? How can we share in that joy more often?*
- *Describe a moment when you felt unwelcome by the Church. What can we do better?*
- *What are some practical steps that the Church can take to walk with you on your life's journey?*

At the end of the conversation, repeat back what understood was being expressed. For those who have been hurt by the Church, take this opportunity to apologize and to share words of care and encouragement.

Scan the QR code to complete the online form to share your thoughts with the larger Church. Thank you for being a listening ear for our Church!

