

# Becoming a Listening Church: *Tips for Listening*



The Pope is preparing for the 2023 Synod of Bishops, but he surprised us. He asked everyone for their participation. A *Synod* is a meeting, but the Pope has coined a new word, *Synodality*, from the Greek for “*together on the way*.” When people travel together, they talk and listen, discover, and understand. The Pope is asking us to *really* listen to *the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties* of people, and then ask what the Spirit might be asking of the Universal Church and the local church in order to respond.

**We have asked you to begin the process by having conversations with family members and friends, and then to report what you have heard on the *Report Form* found on our website, [www.stanfordcatholic.org](http://www.stanfordcatholic.org).** Those responses will provide the initial themes, topics, experiences, and stories for small group discussions.

Have a cup of coffee and a conversation with devout Catholics and lapsed, former Catholics and non-Catholics, with the spiritual but not religious, and with anyone who wants to share their experience of people’s lives with the Church as blessing or challenge.

Some suggested questions:

- a) *What is your experience of the Church?*
- b) *How has it blessed you? How could it have been better?*
- c) *How can the Church better respond to the crying need of the people?*
- d) *What might the Holy Spirit be asking of us, our parish and the Church?*

## **Tips for Listening**

*Attentive listening takes practice! Listen for their insights and feelings.  
Ask for their experiences or stories.*

1. **Give you full and respectful attention.** Choose a comfortable place that allows you to read their gestures and facial expressions. Gauge the importance of what they say by noticing the energy they put into their words.
2. **Put your phone away!**
3. **Encourage their talking** by a nod of the head, a gesture, or by saying, “*Go on*”, “*Say more*”, etc.

4. **Listen for the main idea. Identify their main feeling.**
5. **Don't interrupt or sidetrack the conversation.** If you do, get back on tracks with: *"As you were saying, ...."*
6. **Too often we want to share our ideas, don't!** This time is about them, not you.
7. **Don't plan what you are going to say while they're talking.**
8. **Listen without judging, imputing motives, or jumping to conclusions.** This is no time to explain, defend or correct! That's for another time. Your goal during this time is to understand their point of view.
9. **Ask open-ended and clarifying questions.**
10. **Stay focused.** If your mind begins to wander, try repeating to yourself their key words.
11. **At the end, summarize what you have heard you.** It shows that you've been listening and gives them space to correct any misunderstandings.
12. Sometimes the best gift we can give is an **open-ended question** that invites them to reflect and explore their own thinking and experiences further.
13. **Thank them!**
14. **Finally, pray about what you have heard.** Ask yourself; *"What might the Spirit be saying to me and to the Church through them? How can I respond? How can the Church respond?"*

Here are some interesting YouTubes about listening and having a conversation. (If this is view on a computer or tablet, click on the title to view it.)

1. [The Art of Listening](#), Simon Sinek (5:12 mins.)
2. [Being a Good Listener](#), The School of Life (4:58 mins.)
3. [How To Have a Good Conversation](#), The School of Life (6:07 mins.)
4. [Extreme Listening with Deeyah Khan](#),| Simon Sinek's conversation with Deeyah Khan and the power of her conversations with white supremacists. (52 mins.)
5. [How to Have a Good Conversation](#), Celeste Headlee | TEDxCreativeCoast (12:06 mins.)
6. Timothy Radcliffe OP: [Synodality Makes Us Date to Listen](#), (Former Master General of the Dominican Order