

Steps for a Parish to Embrace Synodal Catechesis

1. Begin with Conversion, Not Programming

Before rearranging schedules or books, begin by cultivating a shared spiritual vision.

- Pray together for a synodal heart.
- Preach and teach on “walking together.”
- Invite parishioners to imagine a Church that listens, accompanies, and learns together.

Begin by forming hearts, not calendars.

2. Create a Culture of Listening

A synodal parish begins in listening.

- Offer listening circles twice a year.
- Train leaders in spiritual conversation and discernment.
- Ask families, youth, elders, and newcomers: *What do you need from the Church? Where is God at work in your life?*

Catechesis will then naturally respond to real needs, not assumed ones.

3. Form Catechists as Spiritual Accompaniers

Shift training away from “how to run a class” toward:

- Prayer and discernment skills
- Facilitation and group dynamics
- Pastoral sensitivity and trauma-aware presence
- Storytelling and witness
- Growth in humility, empathy, and missionary imagination

This equips catechists to **walk with people**, not talk at them.

4. Transition Toward Intergenerational and Community Models

Move gradually:

- Offer occasional intergenerational sessions first (e.g., Advent, Lent).
- Create family-centered faith formation pathways.
- Host community-building experiences: meals, service days, pilgrim walks, shared prayer moments.

Faith is formed in community—around tables, candles, and stories.

5. Employ Experience-Integrated Pedagogy

Every catechetical session—youth or adult—should include:

1. **Welcome / Hospitality**
2. **Listening to life**
3. **Encounter with Scripture and Tradition**
4. **Shared reflection & discernment**
5. **Commitment to mission and daily discipleship**
6. **Prayer & sending**

This is the rhythm of synodal discipleship.

6. Build Bridges Between Worship and Life

Sacraments and liturgy become the center of learning:

- Connect catechesis to the Sunday Gospel
- Integrate simple mystagogical moments
- Share witness stories during Mass (brief and well-prepared)
- Encourage families to pray at home and reflect on the Gospel together

“From the font to the doorstep” becomes the pastoral mantra.

7. Honor and Lift Up the Sensus Fidei

Encourage the faithful to bring their experience, insight, and wisdom:

- Small faith-sharing groups
- Vocational testimonies
- Parish “story nights”
- Ministry leaders meeting regularly to listen and discern

Everyone has a piece of the Truth—**and we learn by sharing it.**

8. Prioritize Mission and Mercy

Catechesis isn’t finished when the class ends—it lives in service.

- Service projects tied to learning themes
- Accompaniment of those who struggle: grief groups, recovery circles, prison ministry support
- Encouraging families to practice works of mercy together

A synodal parish is always moving toward the margins.

9. Evaluate Not by Enrollment but by Fruit

Ask regularly:

- Are we growing in compassion?
- Are we listening better?
- Do participants feel seen and loved?
- Are we more prayerful, missionary, joyful, merciful?

This is the measure of success—**transformed hearts and renewed discipleship.**

A Closing Word

This is not about replacing content—but about **reshaping how we learn and live that content together.** It is a movement from:

- **Instruction → Encounter**
- **Transmission → Transformation**
- **Programs → Pilgrimage**
- **Teaching skills → Accompaniment skills**
- **Parish as service provider → Parish as communion of disciples**

It is not a strategy.

It is a spirituality.

A parish that walks together, listens together, prays together, and serves together **will learn Christ from one another—and reveal Christ to the world.**

Talking Points: Synodal Catechesis for a Synodal Church

1. A New Moment in the Church

- Popes Francis and Leo call us to become a Church that **walks, listens, and discerns together**.
- Catechesis must reflect this shift—from **programs to pilgrimage, from instruction to accompaniment**.
- This is not just a method change; it is a **spiritual and ecclesial conversion**.

Catechesis is no longer only “what we teach” but “how we walk with one another in faith.”

2. What We Are Moving From

Traditional model strengths acknowledged—yet often:

- Catechist as lecturer
- Learners as passive recipients
- Emphasis on memorization and content delivery
- Program-centered, age-segregated classrooms

Good roots, but not sufficient for today’s world and mission.

3. What We Are Moving Toward

Synodal catechesis is:

- Participatory and dialogical
- Intergenerational and communal
- Rooted in lived experience and Scripture
- Focused on discernment, encounter, and mission

Every baptized person learns, teaches, and journeys.

4. Key Principles

- **Mutual listening:** “The first act of evangelization is listening.”
 - **Exchange of gifts:** Each person brings wisdom, questions, faith, and experience.
 - **Experience + Gospel + Tradition:** The heart of formation.
 - **Discipleship as daily life:** From liturgy to life, from Church to neighborhood.
 - **Mission-oriented:** Faith expressed in mercy, justice, service, and witness.
-

5. The Role of the Catechist

Catechists become:

- **Accompaniers**, not just teachers
- **Witnesses**, not just explainers

- **Facilitators of encounter and faith-sharing**
- **Disciples among disciples**—humble, listening, missionary

Formation needs to emphasize:

- Prayer and inner life
- Pastoral listening and spiritual conversation
- Scripture and sacrament
- Skills for dialogue and discernment

6. Core Practices in Synodal Catechesis

Every session includes:

1. **Hospitality & belonging**
2. **Listening to life**
3. **Encounter with the Gospel and Church tradition**
4. **Shared reflection & discernment**
5. **Commitment to daily discipleship**
6. **Prayer & sending forth**

Formation becomes **transformational**, not informational alone.

7. Parish Life Implications

This vision touches the whole parish:

From	To
Programs	Relationships
Age-isolated	Intergenerational moments
Teachers talking	Faith shared
Information	Formation + Mission
Parish as service provider	Parish as learning community

8. Realistic Pathway

Start small. Grow organically.

- Begin with listening circles
- Form catechists as spiritual companions
- Integrate synodal methods into current programs
- Introduce seasonal intergenerational gatherings
- Measure by fruit: joy, belonging, discipleship, mercy

Change happens by seeds, not switches.

9. The Fruit We Seek

A parish where people say:

- *“I feel seen, heard, welcomed.”*
- *“I am encountering Jesus here.”*
- *“We learn from one another.”*
- *“I feel sent on mission.”*

A community that **prays, learns, listens, and serves together—**
becoming Christ’s presence in the world.

10. A Final Image

Not a classroom...

but a **pilgrim community** gathered around Christ,
listening for the Spirit,
walking side by side,
and becoming **a school of communion and mission.**
The journey forms the disciple.
