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?*

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**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. You 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