

OSTS Lecture, Fall 2025, 1st Term
September 22nd to October 27th

Course C ***Becoming a Synodal Church (In-Person Class)***

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Descriptor

The Catholic Church has embarked on a journey of synodality which more actively promotes participation of all the faithful in decision-making and governance of the Church. This course will explore what it means to be a synodal Church, the theological background, the practical issues and the implications for Christianity and beyond. (52 words)

Outline

Week 1: The issues

There are numerous serious problems in Christian Churches related to abuse and suppression of marginalized groups including women, children, LGBTQ+, ethnic groups, etc. Many of these problems parallel identical problems found in the surrounding culture. These problems are rooted in certain basic sociological tendencies which will continue to foster problems of abuse until these tendencies are addressed. This first lesson will identify the various problems of abuse, the underlying sociological issues, and the need for change to become a more inclusive church and a church which embraces diversity.

Week 2: Theological Background

The lesson will examine the various forms of synods employed in Christian Churches. It then goes on to examine how the idea of synod can be extended to becoming a synodal Church or synodality. Ultimately, a Christian solution must have a solid theological foundation otherwise synodality is no more likely to succeed than any other solution from the past. Sensus fidelium, or the sense of the faithful, provides this theological foundation for synodality and will be discussed in some detail.

Week 3: A Practical Implementation

This lesson will look in detail at how the Catholic Church has tried to bring a theological concept into reality based on the practical implementation of synodality which has been underway since 2022. This includes a description of how the synodal process moves from collecting the views and opinions of all the faithful to discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit. It also includes an assessment of the problems that have occurred in this process, how they are being overcome and some of the lessons learned during these first few years.

Week 4: The Current Impact

As well as the challenge of implementing synodality, there are other challenges within the Church including sources of resistance at all levels of the Church where change is resisted. The lesson will highlight a few examples of this kind of resistance and discuss these examples from both the theological and sociological perspective.

Week 5: Implications for the Christian Church and Beyond

The exercise in synodality on which the Catholic Church embarked was motivated by problems that have been experienced by other Christian denominations as well as large secular organizations. This lesson considers how the experiences gained from the Catholic synodal process will impact ecumenical relationships and provide a template for governance which has applications in the Christian world and beyond.

Bio

Lynn Lavictoire has pursued an education in theology including a Bachelor, M.Div, and Master degrees at Saint Paul University. She is currently the chair for the Catholic Network for Women's Equality. Her passion is raising awareness for the marginalized and promoting positive change.