

Together

Gathering of the People of God



Press kit

The announcement by Pope Francis

On Sunday 15 January 2023, after the Angelus in St Peter's Square, the Holy Father said:

"The path to Christian unity and the path of synodal conversion of the Church are linked. I would like to take this opportunity to say that on Saturday 30 September, an ecumenical prayer vigil will be held on St. Peter's Square, with which we will entrust to God the work of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. For the young people coming to the vigil, there will be a special programme throughout that weekend, led by the Taizé community. As of now, I invite brothers and sisters of all Christian denominations to participate in this "Gathering of the People of God."

The "Together" project in brief

Young people aged 18 to 35 from different European countries and from all Christian traditions are invited to come to Rome from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon for a weekend of sharing. They will be hosted by the parishes and communities of Rome and stay with local people. For young Catholics, this event can be experienced as a follow-up to the World Youth Day which will take place in Lisbon at the beginning of August.

At the heart of this weekend of sharing will be an ecumenical prayer vigil in Rome on 30 September 2023, in the presence of Pope Francis and representatives of various churches. Open to all the People of God, this prayer together will include listening to the Word of God, praise and intercession, Taizé songs and silence – a strong sign of fellowship, unity and peace.

Link with the Synod of the Catholic Church

The ecumenical prayer vigil will be held on the eve of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which will have as its theme: "For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission." and will take place from 4 to 29 October 2023. As Pope Francis said in his announcement of 15 January 2023, this vigil is part of a synodal and ecumenical journey: "The path of Christian unity and the path of the synodal conversion of the Church are linked."

Moreover, Pope Francis already had occasion to underline the close relationship between synodality and ecumenism during his audience with His Holiness Mar Awa III (19 November 2022) when he affirmed that "the path of synodality... is and must be ecumenical, just as the ecumenical path is synodal". Thus, the presence of leaders of the various Christian Churches for such an ecumenical prayer vigil in Rome, and on the eve of the synodal assembly, will be of unprecedented significance.

Genesis of the project

In October 2021, Brother Alois, prior of Taizé, was invited to speak at the opening of the Synod of Bishops on synodality in Rome. Addressing the participants, he remarked amongst other things:

"It seems to me desirable that there should be on the synodal journey moments to breathe, like halts, to celebrate the unity already achieved in Christ and to make this visible. (...) Would it be possible that one day, in the course of the synodal process, not only delegates but the people of God, not only Catholics but believers from the various Churches to be invited to a large ecumenical gathering? For through baptism and the Scriptures, are we not sisters and brothers in Christ, united in a communion that is still imperfect but nevertheless real, even when theological questions remain unanswered. (...) We would discover that by being united in Christ, we can become peacemakers.

The meaning of the gathering

Within the framework of the synodal process of the Catholic Church, this "Gathering of the People of God" aims to demonstrate the desire to increase the visible unity of "journeying" Christians. Here is an excerpt from the presentation of the project published on the website www.together2023.net:

"Is it not Christ who calls us and opens a way for us to go forward with him as fellow travellers, together with those who live on the margins of our societies? On this journey, in a dialogue that reconciles, we want to remember that we need each other, not so that we might be stronger together but as a contribution to peace in the human family. In gratitude for this growing sense of communion, we can find the momentum needed to meet today's challenges faced with the polarisations that fracture the human family and the cry of the earth. In encounter and mutual listening, let us walk together as the people of God."

Practical questions

When?

From Friday 29 September to Sunday 1 October 2023.

Where?

In Rome and in various places around the world.

Who is involved in the preparations?

Already some fifty church groupings, of all denominational origins: Churches and ecclesial federations, communities and movements, youth ministry services. On the initiative of Taizé and in close collaboration with the Secretariat of the Synod in Rome, the Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity, the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, and the Vicariate of Rome. A list of partners involved will be regularly updated on the event website: www.together2023.net.

Who can take part in the gathering?

The Saturday prayer vigil is open to everyone. Young adults from 18 to 35 can come to Rome from Friday evening to Sunday. They will be hosted by parishes and Christian communities of the city.

What will be the programme for young people?

x Arrival on Friday

Young adults taking part in the whole weekend should arrive on Friday 29/09 afternoon. They will be assigned to a host parish which will offer them hospitality.

x Saturday morning

Saturday 30/09 morning will start with a programme split up into different “pathways” with meetings in different parts of Rome.

x Workshops & round-tables

Participants will take part in workshops and round-tables on different themes in churches of different denominations and other places.

x Praise and worship

A highlight of the weekend for young adults will be a time of praise and worship in an iconic location in the centre of Rome at the beginning of the afternoon on Saturday.

x Prayer vigil

This ecumenical prayer vigil open to everyone will take place on St Peter’s Square in Rome on the Saturday evening. Pope Francis and representatives of different Churches will participate.

Logo

The image of the tent recalls the verse in Isaiah 54.2: "Enlarge the site of your tent!"

It is also an invitation to come together "under the same tent".

The silhouettes – one of the elements of the synod's logo – sum up our humanity in all its diversity of life situations, generations and origins. They evoke the people of God on their way towards the tent, a space for fellowship and a place of God's presence.



Taking part in preparations

Ten working groups are being set up to follow the different aspects and challenges of the preparation. Registration for these groups is still possible by contacting volunteers@together2023.net.

What are the next steps?

- From 12 to 15 March 2023: meeting in Rome of delegates from the various church groupings involved, with an option to participate online.
- End of March to mid-June 2023: a team of volunteers will be working on site in Rome to visit parishes and Christian communities and tackle the various logistical challenges.

For further information

- Official event website: www.together2023.net
- Facebook / Instagram: [@30Sept2023](#) | [#Together2023](#)
- Twitter: [@Together2023](#)

Press contact

media@together2023.net