



How to become a synodal Church in mission with the laity?

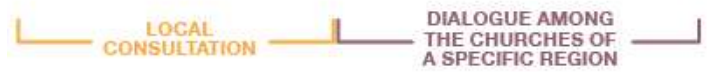
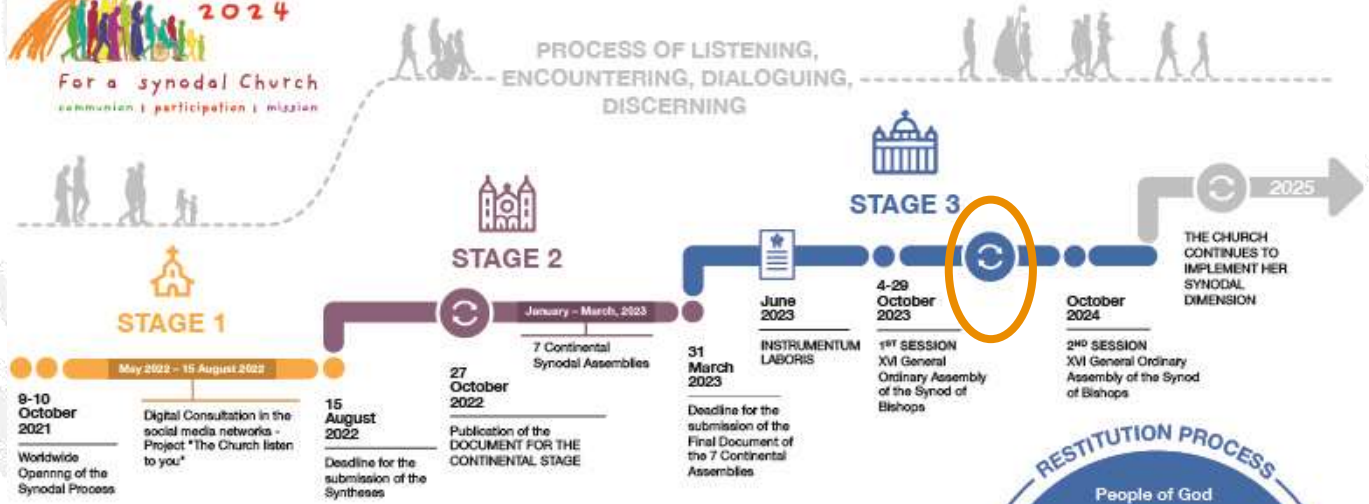
UCESM, April 19 2024

Sr Nathalie Becquart, *xmcj*, *Under-Secretary
to the General Secretariat for the Synod*

A reflection in the light of the current synod



The Synodal Process 2021 - 2024



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Becoming a synodal Church

Pope Francis, Address *For the Opening of the Synod, October 9, 202*

- “And so, brothers and sisters, let us experience this moment of encounter, listening and reflection as a *season of grace* that, in the joy of the Gospel, allows us to recognize at least *three opportunities*. First, that of **moving not occasionally but structurally towards a synodal Church**, an open square where all can feel at home and participate. The Synod then offers us the opportunity **to become a listening Church**, to break out of our routine and pause from our pastoral concerns in order to stop and listen. To listen to the Spirit in adoration and prayer.
- (...) The Holy Spirit guides us where God wants us to be, not to where our own ideas and personal tastes would lead us. Father Congar, of blessed memory, once said: **“There is no need to create another Church, but to create a different Church”** (*True and False Reform in the Church*). That is the challenge. **For a “different Church”, a Church open to the newness that God wants to suggest**, let us with greater fervour and frequency invoke the Holy Spirit and humbly listen to him, journeying together as he, the source of communion and mission, desires: with docility and courage.”

➤ A call for religious life

DCS 80. **All Church institutions, as fully participatory bodies, are called to consider how they might integrate the call to synodality into the ways in which they exercise their functions and their mission, renewing their structures and procedures.**



How to be a synodal church in mission?

Becoming a synodal Church, a learning by doing

Pope Francis « Il cammino si fa camminando »

The way is done by walking

- **The synod as a learning process, a school of synodality**
- **The guiding question :**
 - **How does this “journeying together”, which takes place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to Her and what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?**



The synthesis report of the first session of the XVI ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

- Convergences (C)
- Matters for Consideration (M)
- Proposals (P)

All official documents
for the synod
<https://www.synod.va/>



A story to envision what is a concrete experience of synodality in religious life



Lambert WILSON

Michael LONSDALE

OF GODS AND MEN



The experience of the Tibhirine monks during the period of terrorism in Algeria:

- An experience of communal discernment in a crisis situation:
 - **Should we stay or should we go?**
- The experience of a community in which a synodal process is taking place, leading to a personal and communal spiritual journey.
 - **From dissensus to consensus**

"we didn't elect you to decide on your own".

A discernment in common involving the people of the village

- **“The decision does not stop at the yardstick of personal conscience, of individual questioning. For the brothers, discernment was extended to the community dimension**, as the film clearly shows: this has real implications for the very definition of monastic life. The brothers ask themselves: to stay or to leave? This puts to the test their fidelity to the vows they have taken, and in particular to the vow of stability, which commits the monk to live until his last day in the abbey that welcomes him. To leave would be to resign. But taking unnecessary risks makes no sense. And what if, in the end, monastic stability was linked first and foremost to the community, and not to a place or walls? This would no longer prevent a move, and indeed, in discussions over the last few months, it was envisaged that in the event of severe risks, “?a rendezvous would be made in Morocco?”, in the annex community of Fez created in 1988.
- **The Atlas monks go further: personal discernment is forged with the community dimension, but also with the people of the village.** Of course, the brothers, with their well-tempered characters, made the choice of a monastic life, but each, for different reasons, wanted this vocation to take root in Algeria. As Christian de Chergé explains in his spiritual testament, they are linked “?to God and to this country”, to a people. **The true story of a villager's conversation about the bird on the branch expresses this attachment well. We are like the bird on the branch”, says one of the monks... “You are the branch, we are the bird”, replies the villager. If you leave, what happens to us?** Historically, the monastery set up in 1938 on a vast ^{19th-century} vineyard was indeed the first in place, and the village grew from the 1950s onwards. But there's more to the exchange than that: the monks, from the very beginning of their presence and even more so during troubled times, brought a degree of security and stability to the village. **If the monks leave, their neighbors have no reason to stay. If the brothers leave, there's no one to take their place...”**

Christoph Henning, *Des hommes et des dieux. Retour sur les raisons d'un succès*, [Études 2011/7-8 \(Tome 415\)](#), pages 77 à 88

A synod to learn to walk together and live unity in diversity



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

The centrality of baptism

- RS Introduction
- Dear Sisters, dear Brothers "For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor 12:13). This is the experience, full of joy and gratitude, that we have had in this First Session of the Synodal Assembly held from 4 to 29 October 2023 on the theme "For a Synodal Church. Communion, Participation, Mission". **Despite our diversity of backgrounds, languages and cultures, through the common grace of Baptism we have been able to live these days together with one heart and spirit.** We have sought to sing like a choir, many voices as though expressing one soul. **The Holy Spirit has gifted us with an experience of the harmony that He alone can generate; it is a gift and a witness in a world that is torn and divided.**

Journeying together as baptised to serve today's world

- **RS Introduction**
- **Our Assembly has taken place while wars both old and new have raged in the world, with dramatic consequences that are impacting upon countless victims.** The cry of those who are poor resounded among us, of those forced to migrate and of those suffering violence and the devastating consequences of climate change. We heard their cry not only through the media, but also through the voices of many present, who are personally involved in these tragic events whether through their families or their people. **We have all, at all times, taken this cry into our hearts and prayers, wondering how our Churches can foster paths of reconciliation, hope, justice and peace.**
- We understood, in fact, that **walking together as baptised persons, in the diversity of charisms, vocations, and ministries, is important not only for our communities, but also for the world.** Evangelical solidarity is like a lamp, which must not be placed under a bushel, but on a lampstand so that it may shed light on the whole house (cf. Mt 5:15). The world needs this testimony today more than ever. As disciples of Jesus, we cannot shirk the responsibility of demonstrating and transmitting the love and tenderness of God to a wounded humanity.

Around a synodal table



All disciples, all missionaries the equal dignity of all the baptized coresponsible together for the mission of the Church



All together as religious among the People of God

- c) The manner in which the Assembly proceeded in the Paul VI Hall, including the seating of people in small groups at round tables, was likened for some cultures to the biblical image of the wedding banquet (Rev 19:9). **This was understood as emblematic of a synodal way of being Church** and an image of the Eucharist, which is the source and summit of synodality, with the Word of God at the centre. **In a Church that is living synodally, different cultures, languages, rites, ways of thinking, and realities can engage together and fruitfully in a sincere search for the Spirit's guidance.**



The longing of religious for a synodal Church of participation and co-responsability

- The desire to strengthen the synodal model - to walk together as the people of God and as consecrated persons - appears in all the conversations summarized here. From this synthesis each Institute and community will be able to continue its reflection and its commitment and efforts in favour of synodality.
- 11 We dream of a Church of collaborative and communal discernment: where the most important issues are resolved in consultation with the greatest number of people involved and where those who are different, those who denounce and proclaim are listened to.
- 12 **The Church of a new paradigm, not pyramidal but circular and horizontal:** participatory, witnessing, compassionate, inclusive, unified, transforming Church; listening Church, Church of the people

A strong call to foster collaboration with the laity and partner with others

- 13. 3. Openness to collaboration
- **Consecrated life - on all continents - expresses the desire for greater collaboration and partnership with all lay people**, to include them in more roles within their charismatic Institutes and families. The aim is greater mutual appreciation and the possibility of enriching and learning from each other. This is something we still need to investigate and concretise. There are deeper and fuller ways of collaborating that we have not yet imagined, and we must work together to achieve this.
- “Networks are created between people working towards the same purpose or goal: meaningful encounters with others, joint paths of spirituality - prayer/contemplation, interfaith relationships, migration, climate change, seeking the common good. ▪ The seeds of synodality arise in the search for the meaning of life by people from all walks of life who come together for this purpose; the pandemic situation has made it easier to search together and help each other; thus, small Christian communities have also been born” Synthesis UISG-USG

1. Understanding synodality



SR 1. Synodality: Experience and Understanding

1Ch) In its broadest sense, **synodality can be understood as Christians walking in communion with Christ toward the Kingdom along with the whole of humanity.** Its orientation is towards mission, and its practice involves gathering in assembly at each level of ecclesial life. **It involves reciprocal listening, dialogue, community discernment, and creation of consensus as an expression that renders Christ present in the Holy Spirit, each taking decisions in accordance with their responsibilities.**



“Synodality is the way of being the Church today according to the will of God, in a dynamic of discerning and listening together to the voice of the Holy Spirit.”

Pope Francis

- This synod brings a personal integration of this call

“Synodality is the Second Vatican Council in a nutshell”

Ormond Rush



From a top-down/teaching church to a listening/learning church “Communion-in-mission”

Synodality radically reconceives the distinction between the hierarchy as the *ecclesia docens* (the Church that teaches) and the laity as *ecclesia discens* (the Church that learns): ultimately the Church is always primarily in learning



Synodality is based on the principle of the participation of all in the life of the Church

- **SYN 57** “Synodality means that the whole Church is a subject and that everyone in the Church is a subject. The faithful are σύνοδοι, companions on the journey. They are called to play an active role inasmuch as they share in the one priesthood of Christ[62], and are meant to receive the various charisms given by the Holy Spirit in view of the common good[63]. Synodal life reveals a Church consisting of free and different subjects, united in communion, which is dynamically shown to be a single communitarian subject built on Christ, the corner-stone, and on the Apostles, who are like pillars, built like so many living stones into "a spiritual house" (cf. 1 Peter 2,5), "a dwelling-place of God in the Spirit" (*Ephesians 2,22*).”

International Theological Commission, Sinodality in the life and mission of the Church, 2018
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html

- Synodality is a process of empowerment of the baptized
- “What concerns all should be decided by all”

An answer to the signs of the times

- The experience of the synod on youth and the synod on the amazon :
 - Synodality is the key
 - To journey with people
 - to transmit the faith today
 - To meet the current missionary challenges
 - **FDSY 121. The experience they shared has made the Synod participants aware of the importance of a synodal form of the Church for the proclamation and transmission of the faith.** The participation of the young helped to “reawaken” synodality, which is a “constitutive element of the Church... as Saint John Chrysostom says, ‘Church and Synod are synonymous’ – inasmuch as the Church is nothing other than the ‘journeying together’ of God’s flock along the paths of history towards the encounter with Christ the Lord” (Francis, *Address for the Commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops*, 17 October 2015). Synodality characterizes both the life and the mission of the Church, which is the People of God formed of young and old, men and women of every culture and horizon, and the Body of Christ, in which we are members one of another, beginning with those who are pushed to the margins and trampled upon. In the course of the exchanges and the testimonies, the Synod brought out certain fundamental traits of a synodal style: this is the goal of the conversion to which we are called. *Final Document of the Synod on Youth*, <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/final-document-of-the-synod-of-bishops-on-young-people--faith-an.html>

The anthropological need for a culture of synodality

- **A relational anthropology**

- Convergences between developmental science/neurosciences and Christian anthropology
- Understanding based on reciprocity, humans are embodied, holistic, relational and non-reducible organisms

- Human beings are created men and women at the image of God, with a vocation for communion
 - human beings are fundamentally relational
 - Human beings are made for love and friendships, for relationships of mutuality
 - Human beings need to be seen holistically as an embodied spiritual thoughtful being
 - Human beings are vulnerable and fragile, imperfect and incomplete and imperfect → they need the others
 - Human beings are interdependent and interconnected
 - Human beings flourish by participating to network of giving and receiving care
 - Human beings are deeply interconnected with the rest of creation
 - “becoming one’s best self with and for others, and with a higher purpose”
- Human culture is dynamic

- EG “ we are all part of a journeying community”
- The model of a pluriform unity

The experience of synodality as the way forward



1Cb) This process has renewed our experience of and desire for the Church as God's home and family, a Church that is closer to the lives of Her people, less bureaucratic and more relational. The terms “synodal” and “synodality” have been associated with this experience and desire, offering an understanding that now requires further clarification. This is the Church that young people first declared they desired in 2018 on the occasion of the Synod of Youth.

Relationships at the center

A synodal church is a relational church



Relationships at the center

- **FDSY 122. It is in relationships – with Christ, with others, in the community – that faith is handed on.** For the sake of mission, too, **the Church is called to adopt a relational manner that places emphasis on listening, welcoming, dialogue and common discernment in a process that transforms the lives of those taking part.** “A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening ‘is more than simply hearing’. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the ‘Spirit of truth’ (*Jn 14:17*), in order to know what he ‘says to the Churches’ (*Rev 2:7*)” (Francis, [Address for the Commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops](#), 17 October 2015). In this way **the Church presents herself as the “tent of meeting” in which the Ark of the Covenant is preserved (cf. *Ex 25*): a dynamic Church, in movement, which accompanies while journeying, strengthened by many charisms and ministries.** Thus does God make himself present in this world.

Two important take away for synodality

- **The ability to face and manage tensions to embrace diversity as a path for unity**
 - The integration of plurality beyond fragmentation and polarization
 - The call to value diversity and a polyedric form of unity rather than uniformity and oppositions
- **The ability to embrace vulnerability, incompleteness and humility**
 - The eschatological dimension
 - A pathway highlighting humility, openness to newness through small steps and patience rather than revolution
 - RS 11Cd) In order to exercise ordained ministry in a context of co-responsibility, **it is necessary to be aware of one's own capacities and limitations**

The need of the others to broaden our perspectives



Facing resistances

- The history of reform in the Church can nevertheless provide us with a rule of appreciation. It shows that **the more resistance a reform generates, the more important it is**. We can apply this rule to the Council.
- No doctrine or reform of Vatican II met with greater resistance during the Council itself than episcopal collegiality in the third chapter of the dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*. The doctrine stated that, in essence, bishops had a responsibility not only for their own dioceses, but also, when acting collegially with and under the Roman Pontiff, for the Church as a whole. The doctrine consisted in re-establishing one of the Church's oldest traditions, obscured by the long process of centralization of the Holy See's authority, which had reached an almost absolute level by the time the Council opened.

*John O'Malley, RÉFORME DE L'ÉGLISE Réflexion d'un historien John W. O'Malley S.E.R. |
« Études » 2017/1 Janvier | pages 71 à 82 ISSN 0014-1941*

The protagonism of the Holy Spirit

- “To the extent, then, that we are all protagonists in a synodal Church, **our role as protagonists must be imagined under the aegis of the Spirit, who is "the great protagonist"** “. Jos Moons
 - As you are aware, we are about to begin a synodal process, a journey on which the whole Church will reflect on the theme: *Towards a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission*: those three pillars. Three phases are planned, and will take place between October 2021 and October 2023. This process was conceived as an exercise in mutual listening. I want to emphasize this. It is an exercise of mutual listening, conducted at all levels of the Church and involving the entire People of God. The Cardinal Vicar, the auxiliary bishops, priests, religious and laity have to listen to one another, and then to everyone else. Listening, speaking and listening. It is not about garnering opinions, not a survey, but a matter of listening to the Holy Spirit, as we read in the book of Revelation: “Whoever has ears should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches” (2:7). To have ears, to listen, is the first thing we need to do. To hear God’s voice, to sense his presence, to witness his passage and his breath of life.
 - In this Synod, we want to get to the point where we can say, “it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”, for, guided by the Holy Spirit, you will be in constant dialogue among yourselves, but also in dialogue with the Holy Spirit. Remember those words: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to place on you any burden...” “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”. That is how you should try to discuss things at every stage of this synodal process. Without the Holy Spirit, this will be a kind of diocesan parliament, but not a Synod. We are not holding a diocesan parliament, examining this or that question, but making a journey of listening to one another and to the Holy Spirit, discussing yes, but discussing with the Holy Spirit, which is a way of praying.
 - Being a synodal Church means being a Church that is the sacrament of Christ’s promise that the Spirit will always be with us. We show this by growing in our relationship with the Spirit and the world to come.

Pope Francis, "Discourse to the faithful of the diocese of Rome",

The primacy of grace

SR 2. Gathered and Sent by the Trinity

- 2Cc) **The renewal of the Christian community is possible only by recognizing the primacy of grace.** If spiritual depth is lacking, synodality remains cosmetic. What we are called to, however, is not only to translate into community processes a spiritual experience gained elsewhere, but more deeply **to experience how reciprocal relationships are the place and form of an authentic encounter with God.** In this sense, while drawing on the rich spiritual heritage of the Tradition, the synodal perspective contributes to renewing its forms: of a prayer open to participation, a discernment lived together, and a missionary energy that arises from sharing and that radiates as service.
- 2PI) **In order to illuminate ecclesial life, the practice of discernment can usefully be implemented in the pastoral sphere, in a way that is contextually appropriate.** This will make it possible to recognize more readily the charisms present in the community, to entrust tasks and ministries wisely. Going beyond the mere planning of activities we will be able to plan pastoral paths in the light of the Spirit.

2. Fostering coresponsibility in the mission with laity



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission



The primacy of Christ and the orientation towards mission



To elaborate a common vision and to reach a consensus



A call to be on the move

- A dynamic vision of the Church in history, a pilgrim Church as People of God on the way
- A dynamic vision of identity through an ongoing discernment



Synodality, a dynamic vision of the Church in history

→ A dynamic vision of the Trinitarian God

- **SYN 49 : Synodality manifests the ‘pilgrim’ character of the Church.** The image of the People of God, gathered from among the nations (*Acts* 2,1-9; 15,14), expresses its social, historical and missionary character, which corresponds to **the condition and vocation of each human person as *homo viator***. The path is the image that clarifies our understanding of the mystery of Christ as the Way that leads to the Father. **Jesus is the way from God to man and from man to God.** The grace-filled event whereby He made Himself a pilgrim by pitching His tent among us (*John* 1,14), goes on in the synodal path of the Church

SYN = Synodality in the life and mission of the Church, International Theological Commission, March 2018
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html



Fostering a common passion and vision for the mission

- PD. The Pastors, established by God as “authentic guardians, interpreters and witnesses of the faith of the whole Church,”¹⁶ should not be afraid to listen to the Flock entrusted to them. The consultation of the People of God does not imply the assumption within the Church of the dynamics of democracy based on the principle of majority, because there is, at the basis of participation in every synodal process, a shared passion for the common mission of evangelization and not the representation of conflicting interests. (*Preparatory Document for the Synod*)
- **A new culture of ecclesial consensus on the basis of a *consensus omnium fidelium***, because "in a synodal style, decisions are made by discernment, on the basis of a *consensus* born of common obedience to the Spirit" (*PD* 30).

Coresponsibility for the mission



Participation and co-responsibility

- FDSY 103 - It is worth noting, finally, that among the characteristics of our “being Church” that the young particularly appreciate are a **readiness and a capacity for working collaboratively**: in this way the formation of the young can be more significant, effective and incisive. **The skill required for working collaboratively involves cultivating specific relational virtues**: the discipline of listening and the capacity to give the other person space, readiness to forgive and willingness to “put oneself on the line”, according to a genuine spirituality of communion.

Final Document of the Synod on Youth, October 2018

Listening to and valuing everyone

- CV 206. **Youth ministry has to be synodal**; it should involve a “journeying together” that values “the charisms that the Spirit bestows in accordance with the vocation and role of each of the Church’s members, through a process of co-responsibility... Motivated by this spirit, **we can move towards a participatory and co-responsible Church**, one capable of appreciating its own rich variety, gratefully accepting the contributions of the lay faithful, including young people and women, consecrated persons, as well as groups, associations and movements. **No one should be excluded or exclude themselves**”.[\[111\]](#)
- 207. In this way, **by learning from one another**, we can better reflect that wonderful multifaceted reality that Christ’s Church is meant to be. She will be able to attract young people, for **her unity is not monolithic, but rather a network of varied gifts that the Spirit ceaselessly pours out upon her, renewing her and lifting her up from her poverty**.

Entering in a dynamic of mutuality

SR 16. Towards a Listening and Accompanying Church

- 16Ca) During the first two years of the synodal journey, including during our Assembly, listening is the word that best expresses our experience. This is listening given and received. **Listening is a deeply human reality, a dynamic of reciprocity in which each makes a contribution to the other's journey while receiving a contribution to one's own.**



A call to empower lay people



With the poor, as protagonists



With the poor, as protagonists

SR 4. People in Poverty, Protagonists of the Church's Journey

- 4mi) In some parts of the world, the Church is poor, with those who are poor, and for those who are poor. There is a constant risk, one to be carefully avoided, of viewing those living in poverty in terms of "them" and "us," as "objects" of the Church's charity. **Putting those who experience poverty at the centre and learning from them is something the Church must do more and more.**

With women as equal partners in the Church and Society



Calling more women in leadership

SR 9. Women in the Life and Mission of the Church

- 9P m) **It is urgent to ensure that women can participate in decision-making processes and assume roles of responsibility in pastoral care and ministry.** The Holy Father has significantly increased the number of women in positions of responsibility in the Roman Curia. This should also happen at other levels of Church life, in consecrated life and dioceses. Provision needs to be made in Canon Law accordingly.

with people of different cultures



SR 5. A Church “out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation

- 5Mg) We need to cultivate **a greater sensitivity towards the riches of our diverse expressions of being Church**. This requires a search for a dynamic balance between the dimension of the Church as a whole and its local rootedness, between respect for the bond of Church unity and the risk of homogenization that stifles variety. **Meanings and priorities vary among different contexts, and this requires identifying and fostering forms of decentralization**
- 5Pm) We need a shared framework for managing and evaluating experimentations with forms of decentralization, identifying all the actors involved and their roles. For the sake of coherence, discernment processes regarding decentralization must take place in a synodal style, envisaging the concurrence and contribution of all actors involved at different levels.

With young people as a priority



1Cb) This process has renewed our experience of and desire for the Church as God's home and family, a Church that is closer to the lives of Her people, less bureaucratic and more relational. The terms “synodal” and “synodality” have been associated with this experience and desire, offering an understanding that now requires further clarification. This is the Church that young people first declared they desired in 2018 on the occasion of the Synod of Youth.

Empowering young leaders

SR 17. Mission in the Digital Environment

- b) **Digital culture, then, is not so much a distinct area of mission as a crucial dimension of the Church's witness in contemporary culture.** This is why it holds special significance in a synodal Church.



c. A sign of the times : the growing reality of Charismatic Families



c. A sign of the times : the growing reality of Charismatic Families

- Since 2014 have met in Rome lay people, priests, men and women religious.
- The initiative called "Charismatic Families in Dialogue" was born, listening and in the desire to respond to the invitation of Pope Francis, who said in his letter for the year of consecrated life: "In fact around every family as well as to societies of apostolic life and to secular institutes themselves, there is a larger family, the "charismatic family", which includes several institutes that recognize themselves in the same charism, and above all lay Christians who feel called, precisely in the their lay condition, to participate in the same charismatic reality. "
- A Charismatic Family is then made up of institutes, people of different states of life - lay people, priests, religious men and women, seculars - who recognize themselves as belonging to the same Charism of the Founder or Foundress and are united by each other in the fraternity. in Christ.
- Thus, were born meetings of formation, sharing, collaboration between the various Charismatic Families, with the aim of getting to know each other among the various charisms and deepening the path of communion and collaboration in dialogue and mutual service.
- Since 2014, in May and November each year, an increasing number of charismatic families gather in Rome from all over the world to dialogue: hence the name "Charismatic Families in dialogue" given to the movement.
- So through the various initiatives, in dialogue and in the authentic exchange of experiences, we try to live what is truly at heart: to live the charism together, to discover it in a richer way in the reciprocity of fraternal relationships, in a more creative way in the collaboration between the different vocations, in a more attractive way, in synodality with the whole Church.

SR 10. Consecrated Life and Lay Associations and Movements: a Charismatic Sign

- 10C b) **The Church's charismatic dimension is made manifest in the rich and varied forms of consecrated life.** This testimony has contributed to renewing the life of the ecclesial community in every age and provides an antidote to the perennial temptation towards worldliness. The diverse families that compose religious life demonstrate the beauty of discipleship and holiness in Christ, whether in their distinctive forms of prayer, their service among the people, whether through forms of community life, the solitude of the contemplative life or at the frontier of new cultures. **Those in consecrated life have often been the first to sense important historical changes and to heed the promptings of the Spirit. Today, too, the Church needs their prophetic voice and action. The Christian community also recognizes and wishes to be attentive to the practices of synodal life and discernment that have been tried and tested in communities of consecrated life, maturing over the centuries. We know that we can learn from them wisdom in how to walk the synodal path.** Many Congregations and Institutes practice conversation in the Spirit or similar forms of discernment in the conduct of provincial and general chapters, in order to renew structures, rethink lifestyles, and activate innovative forms of service and proximity to the poorest. In other cases, however, we find the persistence of an authoritarian style, which makes no room for dialogue.

Convergences

- a) The Church has always benefitted from the gift of charisms, be it from the most extraordinary to the simplest. Through them the Holy Spirit rejuvenates and renews the Church with joy and gratitude. The Holy People of God recognise in these charisms the providential help with which God sustains, directs and illuminates His mission.
- c) With equal gratitude, the People of God recognize the seeds of renewal in communities with a long history that has blossomed into new ecclesial communities. **Lay associations, ecclesial movements and new communities are a precious sign of the maturation of the co-responsibility of all the baptized.** They hold particular value because of their experience in promoting communion among different vocations, the impetus with which they proclaim the Gospel, their proximity to those on the margins economically and socially and through their promotion of the common good. They are often models of synodal communion and of participation for mission.
- d) Cases of abuse of various kinds experienced by those in religious life and members of lay associations, especially of women, signal a problem in the exercise of authority and demand decisive and appropriate interventions.

Matters for Consideration

- e) The Church's magisterium has a well-developed body of teaching on the importance of both hierarchical and charismatic gifts in the life and mission of the Church. This calls for growth in ecclesial understanding and in theological reflection. **It is therefore worth considering anew the ecclesiological significance and concrete pastoral implications of this teaching.**
- f) The variety of charismatic expressions in the Church underscores the People of God's commitment to being a prophetic presence in proximity to the least of our sisters and brothers, and to providing contemporary culture with a deeper sense of the spiritual aspects of life. **There is a need to develop a more profound understanding of how consecrated life, as well as lay associations, ecclesial movements, and new communities, place their charisms at the service of communion and mission in local churches, augmenting existing paths towards holiness with a presence that is prophetic.**

Proposals

- g) **We believe the time has come for a revision of the 1978 document *Mutuae relationes*, regarding the relationships between bishops and religious in the Church. We propose that this revision be completed in a synodal manner, consulting all involved.**
- h) **To the same end, it is necessary to put in place, in a synodal spirit, means and instruments for promoting encounters and forms of collaboration between Episcopal Conferences and the Conferences of Superiors and Major Superiors of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.**
- i) **At the level of both individual local churches and groupings of Churches, the promotion of missionary synodality requires the establishment and configuration of councils and advisory bodies at which representatives of lay associations and ecclesial movements and new communities can meet in order to foster enduring relationships between their life and work and that of the local churches.**
- j) **In theological formation at all levels, above all in the formation of ordained ministers, the prominence given to the Church's charismatic dimension should be monitored and strengthened where necessary.**

3. A new style of leadership to implement synodality



a. A new style of leadership in our communities, institutions and ministries



A dynamic vision of synodal leadership

- Leadership for mission
- Leadership for communion
 - A servant leadership
 - A collaborative leadership
 - A discerning leadership
 - The style of discernement
 - The style of accompaniement
 - The style of Jesus' kenosis



Exercising authority as an exercise in listening

- Listening to the Word of God
- Listening to the signs of the times
- Listening to others
- Listening to the Holy Spirit



A new style of leadership, the style of discernment

- **In the synodal church, the pastor blends in with the community in which he walks and of which he is the servant.** He is this close shepherd, immersed in the midst of his flock who smells the sheep. « Shepherds walk with their people: we shepherds walk with our people, at times in front, at times in the middle, at times behind. A good shepherd should move that way: in front to lead, in the middle to encourage and preserve the smell of the flock, and behind, since the people too have their own “sense of smell”. » *Pope Francis*
- **Breathing together:** The minister who leads and accompanies the synodal process then makes the final decision based on this whole spiritual process of listening and discernment which can be understood through the important notion of *conspiratio*
- A notion that can be translated in the words of the theologian Henry Newman as a "common breathing of the faithful and the pastors".

A new style of leadership

- Vision of a servant and collaborative leadership rooted in a conciliar theology of ministry articulated with the vision of synodality
- Re-positioning of the leader as part of the community, bonded to and not separated from the people he/she serves
 - → « co-partners with the Spirit »
 - → accountability, reflection and supervision
- Co-responsibility and participation
- Accompaniment and empowerment
- A new relationship to the power
 - An exercise of the authority as an empowerment to liberate the liberty.
 - ➔ Cf FDSY 71 on ***The true sense of authority*** :
« A generative force to activate and liberate the freedom. »

The true sense of authority

- 71. In order to undertake a true journey of maturation, the young need authoritative adults. **In its etymological meaning, *auctoritas* indicates the capacity for enabling growth; it does not express the idea of a directive power, but of a real generative force.** When Jesus encountered the young, in whatever state and condition they might find themselves, even if they were dead, in one way or another he said to them: **“Arise! Grow!”** And his word brought about what he was saying (cf. *Mk* 5:41; *Lk* 7:14). In the episode of the healing of the possessed epileptic (cf. *Mk* 9:14-29), which evokes so many of the forms of alienation experienced by young people today, **it seems clear that Jesus stretches out his hand not to take away freedom but to activate it, to liberate it.** Jesus fully exercises his authority: he wants nothing other than the growth of the young person, without a trace of possessiveness, manipulation or seduction.

Final Document of the Synod on Youth, October 2018

<http://secretariat.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/final-document-of-the-synod-of-bishops-on-young-people--faith-an.html>

Pope's presence at the synod, a synodal style of leadership



c. Rethinking our structures and processes



At the service of mission

SR 8. Church is Mission

- **8M 1) Pastoral structures need to be re-organized so they can readily recognize, call forth, and animate lay charisms and ministries, inserting them into the missionary dynamism of the synodal Church.** Under the guidance of their pastors, the communities will be able to send people as well as sustain those they have sent on mission. In this way, these structures will primarily be at the service of the mission that the faithful carry out within society, in the family, and in work life, rather than focusing exclusively on internal matters or organizational concerns.

Decision-making and decision-taking

SR 18. Structures for Participation

- 18C e) In light of what we have shared, it is important to ask how we can promote participation in the various councils when many feel they are not up to the task. **Synodality grows when each member is involved in processes and decision-making for the mission of the Church.** In this sense, we are encouraged by many small Christian communities in the emerging Churches, who live the closeness of the day-to-day, around the Word of God and the Eucharist.
- 18Pi) **Participatory bodies represent the first instance in which to experience the accountability of those who exercise responsibility.** While we warmly welcome and support their commitment, in turn, they are invited to practice the culture of accountability to the community of which they are an expression.

Transparency and accountability

- RS 12Pj) **It is necessary to implement, in forms legally yet to be defined, structures and processes for regular review of the bishop's performance**, with reference to the style of his authority, the economic administration of the diocese's assets, and the functioning of participatory bodies, and safeguarding against all possible kinds of abuse. **A culture of accountability is an integral part of a synodal Church that promotes co-responsibility, as well as safeguarding against abuses.**
- 175. **The call to be accountable and transparent not only in financial matters but also in decision-making processes and governance.** This may necessitate the revision of some provisions of Canon Law. Those in leadership roles - whether clergy or lay, are also accountable for the formation of the laity and the youth.

Final Document of the Asia Synodal Assembly

Authority and participation : all – some - one

13. The Bishop of Rome in the College of Bishops

- 13Ca) **The synodal dynamic also sheds new light on the ministry of the Bishop of Rome. Indeed, synodality articulates symphonically the communal ("all"), collegial ("some") and personal ("one") dimensions of the Church at the local, regional and universal levels.** In such a vision, the Petrine ministry of the Bishop of Rome is intrinsic to the synodal dynamic, as are the communal aspect that includes the whole People of God and the collegial dimension of the exercise of Episcopal ministry. Therefore, **synodality, collegiality, and primacy refer to each other:** primacy presupposes the exercise of synodality and of collegiality, just as both of them imply the exercise of primacy.

The key issue of formation



14. A Synodal Approach to Formation

- 14Po) In preparation for the next session of the Assembly, a consultation of those responsible for the initial and ongoing formation of priests should be undertaken to assess how the synodal process is being received and **to propose changes that will promote the exercise of authority in a style appropriate to a synodal Church.**

The need to involve lay people in religious formation

- 11Me) **Within the context of the formation of all the baptised for service in a synodal Church, the formation of deacons and priests requires special attention.** The request has been widely expressed at this Assembly that seminaries and other programmes of **priestly formation remain connected to the daily life of the community.** We need to avoid the risks of formalism and ideology that lead to authoritarian attitudes, and impede genuine vocational growth. Revision to programs of formation requires extensive discussion and consideration.

The fruits of spiritual conversation

- **RS 15. Ecclesial Discernment and Open Questions**
15C a) **The experience of Conversation in the Spirit was enriching for all who took part.** Our style of communication, privileging freedom in expressing one's views and listening to each other, was greatly appreciated. It avoided us moving too quickly to a debate based on the reiteration of our own positions without listening first to the reasoning that supports the position of others.

A way forward for the synodal Church

The conversation in the Spirit

A dynamic of discernment in the synodal Church



PERSONAL PREPARATION

By entrusting oneself to the Father, conversing in prayer with the Lord Jesus and listening to the Holy Spirit, each one prepares his or her own contribution to the question about which he or she is called to discern.

Silence, prayer and listening to the Word of God

«Taking the word and listening»

Each person takes turns speaking from his or her own experience and prayer, and listens carefully to the contribution of others.



Silence and Prayer



«Making space for others and the Other»

From what the others have said, each one shares what has resonated most with him or her or what has aroused the most resistance in him or her, allowing himself or herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit: "When, listening, did my heart burn within me?"

Silence and Prayer

«Building together»

Together we dialogue on the basis of what emerged earlier in order to discern and gather the fruit of the conversation in the Spirit: to recognize intuitions and convergences; to identify discordances, obstacles and new questions; to allow prophetic voices to emerge.

It is important that everyone can feel represented by the outcome of the work.

"To what steps is the Holy Spirit calling us together?"



Final prayer of thanksgiving

Opening new paths of dialogue and experimentations



Opening new paths with courage and audacity

- Embrace the vision of a synodal Church
- Engage in a path of conversion and discerning the change you can be
- Start from the reality and make a step
- Don't give up, be patient
- Support each other and empower each other
- Keep hope alive

Conclusion : proceeding along the journey



A synodal path to be continued in local churches until October 2024



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission



“HOW can we be a synodal Church in mission?”

- *I dream of a missionary option', that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. **The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself. As John Paul II once said to the Bishops of Oceania: 'All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion'" EG 27***
- a) **At the level of each local Church: HOW can we enhance the differentiated co-responsibility in the mission of all the members of the People of God?** What ways of relating, structures, processes of discernment and decision-making with regard to mission make it possible to recognise, shape, and promote co-responsibility? What ministries and participatory bodies can be renewed or introduced to better express this co-responsibility? Within the Synthesis Report, reference can be made more specifically to Chapters 8-12, 16 and 18.
- b) **At the level of relations between Churches, between groupings of Churches at different levels and with the Bishop of Rome:** HOW can these relations be creatively articulated in order to find “a dynamic balance between the dimension of the Church as a whole and its local roots” (Synthesis Report chap. 5, lett. g)? Here reference can be made above all to Chapters 13, 19 and 20 of the Synthesis Report.

Keeping the synodal dynamism alive

- **A way to continue the synodal journey**

Cf worksheet 1/ to receive the fruits of the October synod assembly at local level 2/ to continue the synodal path of conversion in the local churches.

THE WORK OF THE THREE FOCAL POINTS AT A GLANCE

