

TOWARDS THE 2023 SYNOD

COMMUNION PARTICIPATION MISSION

THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT'S
SYNODAL PROCESS
2021 - 2023

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THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION, MISSION

1 Called to live an epoch-making event

1. In the beginning: the Word calls us to journey together

In the Bible, the word “Church” means “convocation” of those who are called by God to encounter him personally and as a community. At the same time, although we come from different paths (in terms of age, country, language and culture), converging with God brings us closer together, just as divergent rays become convergent as they approach the sun. **Converging in unity with God and with each other is called “synodality”**. Literally it means “making our way together” with the brothers and sisters we meet, towards God, without discrimination. Every living being, every created thing is, in fact, - as St Bonaventure discovered in the light of the Franciscan charism - a “word of God”, a word that is light and love, an expression of Jesus, the Word of God. This plan of love that embraces the whole universe, we are called to discover together with Him **in freedom and creativity**, remaining faithful to His personal call and keeping our feet on the ground on the road that is the world, thus making ourselves travelling companions of our brothers and sisters in humanity. This means making ourselves one with those who rejoice and hope, who suffer and are in anguish, especially those who are poor. The Second Vatican Council reminds us that there is nothing genuinely human that does not find an echo in the hearts of Christ’s disciples (Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 1). **This journeying together involves us as a Christian community and urges us to listen to everyone who passes by us in the present moment.**

This journeying together involves us as a Christian community and urges us to listen to everyone who passes by us in the present moment

2. Conversion of the way we look at others: love unites all things

The Church is made up of men and women gathered together “in the name of Jesus” (cf. Mt 18:20), guided by the Holy Spirit who inspires actions and words and gives everyone the grace to make the “holy journey” of life (Ps 83:6), as children in the Son, on pilgrimage to

“the bosom of the Father” (Jn 1:18). For this reason, Jesus came to say that He Himself (that is, His life made up of silences and words, of gestures of tenderness and mercy, of denunciation and forgiveness, etc.) is “the Way” that leads from now on to the Father. He remains with us “to the end” (Mt 28:20), as the disciples on the road to Emmaus found, with amazement and great joy, on their way home: Jesus the Way becomes a Wayfarer (cf. Lk 24:13-35). Yes, **Jesus, the Risen One, interconnects the whole of Creation with his love that is stronger than all death** (cf. 1 Cor 15:54-57), so that everything is in a bond of love through him and for him (cf. Col 1:16). Reading the events of our history - often indecipherable, fragmented, broken by conflicts, wounded by unimaginable pain, by unacceptable inequalities - cannot be undertaken by relying solely on our capacity for scientific analysis and done only with intelligence or good will. **The community discernment of the “signs of the times”** (cf. Mt 16:3) - **which is the search for his presence in today’s history - has the Spirit of Christ as its protagonist!** Synodality is for this reason constitutive of the Church’s being. “Church and Synod”, St John Chrysostom went so far as to affirm, “are synonymous”.

Converging in unity with God and with each other is called “synodality”. Literally it means “making our way together” with the brothers and sisters we meet, towards God

3. The crises: Jesus is always with us, but we are not always with Him

Jesus is the sure way that leads us to God and assures us of the constant help of the Holy Spirit. However, He leaves us free to take other paths as well. **He is always with us, but at times we are not with Him.** We can, in fact, close our hearts to Him and to the brothers and sisters we meet and decide to live in isolation as exclusive groups or individuals endowed with great qualities. Perhaps, in some cases, it will seem more efficient and productive to go it alone, but will we still be sure that we are on the right track? Is the Church a group of individuals or elites capable of doing many good things well, or is it a “body”, the risen Body of Jesus, composed of many members organically united by humility, gentleness and magnanimity? **When conflicts arise, Saint Paul invites us to bear with one another in love, having at heart the desire to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.** “There is one body and one

Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **one God and Father of all**, who is above all and through all and in all. **But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.** (Eph 4:4-7). Is this not the work that God expects of us and of the whole Church? Do we not have here a propitious occasion to give the charism that Chiara and all of us have received gratuitously from the Holy Spirit? Jesus asked: "Father, may they all be one, so that the world may believe" (Jn 17:21). Disunity among the members of the Church is, therefore, a "disease" of the body of Christ that is the Church. Synodality - made up of encounters, listening and discernment - is to find together the right remedies for this evil that afflicts humanity because - as Pope Francis so often says to us - **"no one is saved by himself or herself"** (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 113). **For the world of today (and always), unity is both our medicine and our health.**

Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift

4. Next steps: communion, participation and mission

In this change of epoch, Pope Francis calls the whole Church, in the next **three years (2021-2023)**, to make itself a sign of plural and dynamic unity through the launching of a more intense synodal journey. To make everyone co-responsible, **the first year will focus on listening to the entire people of God in all its components: laity, religious and clergy.** The second year will involve the continents and during the third, as an expression of universal communion, the **16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops** with the Pope will be celebrated in Rome. The title of this synodal journey is: "For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission", and it will involve the preparation of two documents (called in Latin: *Instrumentum laboris*) useful for comparison, for the widest participation, for attentive listening and effective community discernment. The institution of the Synods of Bishops by Pope Paul VI (15 September 1965), was the **result of the awareness that the experience of communion made at the Second Vatican Council was at all costs to be continued and pursued in every sphere of the life of the Church:** from local communities to places of governance.

For the world of today (and always) unity is both our medicine and our health

5. The style: Jesus speaks, Mary listens, meditates and acts

Each of us is called to offer his or her own small or great contribution in seeking the Way to follow. Jesus fully knows the will of God the Father to whom he remained faithful even to the point of forsakenness and death on a cross. And in doing so he gave “form” to the Church. **It is necessary, therefore, to make Him speak and listen to Him in our midst, as Mary did when she listened to God in the Spirit at the Annunciation and as the Apostles did with her at Pentecost.** This requires Marian listening and the communal exercise of evangelical discernment of what is happening to us individually and as a community, in order to accept or reject whatever does not edify this “Marian form” of the Church. Imitating Mary, **the Synod is therefore not a Parliament of candidates eager to occupy spaces of power, but a people “called”** by God who take part in that great process of unity that God the Father wants to bring to fulfilment with our participation that is free, plural and sincere (*parresia*).

The Synod is not a Parliament of candidates eager to occupy spaces of power, but a people “called” by God

6. Responsibility: no charism is superfluous

Pope Francis has often spoken of the “reformation”, of the Church “going out”, of listening, of the culture of encounter, etc., and he invites everyone to participate in this journey from which none of us should feel excluded. **No charism is, therefore, superfluous, knowing that the Holy Spirit generously sends his Gifts for the building up of the whole Church so that it may face up to the challenges of the present time.** The charism of unity can make a specific contribution to this journey, certain that Jesus, present among all the members of the synodal Church, will know how to show us the right way for the common good and through which we can find ourselves closer to God and to each other. **The official involvement of movements and associations is really new!** Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary general of the synod, at the request of the Pope, has involved all the associations and movements to participate actively in all phases of the synod, beginning with that of listening to each member of the movements and associations (October 2021-April 2022). “Let us then ask for the gift of *listening*: listening to **God, to the point of hearing with Him the cry of**

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the People; listening to the People, to the point of breathing in the will to which God is calling us” (Pope Francis, *Prayer Vigil in Preparation for the Synod on the Family*, October 4, 2014). It is from this “cry”, in which resounds the cry of Jesus Forsaken, who we welcome and to which we, as one Soul, passionately respond, that we will see Life re-born: from the peripheries to the centre and vice versa.

7. Final Appeal: the convocation

No talent,
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left unused

Each one of us, a member of the Work of Mary, is called to build up the Church, the mystical body of Christ. **No talent, not even the smallest, can be hidden and left unused:** each one is called by name, in the uniqueness and unrepeatability of his or her personal history, to bring his or her own contribution to the synodal journey we are beginning. As Pope Francis said at the opening of the Synod (10 October 2021): we are called to **take on the “style of God”**, who journeys in history and shares the events of humanity. Making Synod means journeying on the same road, journeying together and being open to the adventure of the journey.

2 Official phases of the synod

Three phases (local Church, intermediate bodies, universal Church):

Phase of local Churches and other ecclesial realities - October 2021 - August 2022

In this phase there will be the consultation of the People of God so that the synodal process is carried out by listening to all of the baptized. To facilitate the participation of all, the General Secretariat of the Synod has sent a *Vademecum* with proposals for carrying out the consultation in each particular Church. This will conclude with a *pre-synodal meeting*, which will be the culminating moment of diocesan discernment. At the end of the diocesan phase, each particular Church will send its contributions to the Bishops’ Conference by the date established by its own Bishops’ Conference.

Continental phase September 2022 - March 2023

This continental phase will lead to a dialogue on the text of the

first *Instrumentum Laboris*, prepared by the General Secretariat of the Synod and foreseen for September 2022, which will allow for a further act of discernment in the light of the specific cultural particularities of each continent.

Phase of the universal Church - October 2023

In October 2023, after collecting the results of the continental phase, the General Secretariat of the Synod will send the second *Instrumentum Laboris* to the participants in the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops that will celebrate the Synod of Bishops in Rome, according to the procedures established in the Apostolic Constitution *Episcopalis Communio*.

As Pope Francis said at the opening of the Synod: we are called to take on the "style of God"

3 Stages of our participation in the synodal process

The synodal process should **engage us**:

- in **direct participation** in the synodal process in the **local Churches**
- in a **synodal process within the movement**
- in a **contribution as a movement** to be sent to the General Secretariat of the Synod.

In order to do this, we are defining the **phases of this synodal experience that we wish to have as a movement** the result of which will be greater sharing in each community and the drafting of the document to offer as a movement to the General Secretariat of the Synod.

In the different communities and units in the zones of the movement

- a. Communication with all members about the event and its importance in the zone by sending this *booklet*, the *webinar* presenting it, the *links to the documents* and the synodal consultation tool, allowing for an in-depth study, which can be integrated with the updating meetings in the zones in order to strengthen the beginning of the internal consultation process **by mid-November 2021**.
- b. Participation in the synodal journey in the local contexts: **two meetings are planned from mid-November 2021 to March 2022 to allow time for deepening, sharing and expressing a common mind** with regard to questions asked in the outline sent by the central commis-

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sion (This may also happen during also during annual retreats of the period)

- c. Once the pre-synodal process has been carried out in the local areas of the movement, the contributions will be sent to the contact persons of each zone or zonette (Indigo of the zone or zonetta or a team in the zone) **by the end of March 2022.**
- d. The contact people in each zone or the zonal indigo or the zone team will prepare a synthesis to be sent to the central team at this email address (**percorso.presinodalemdf@focolare.org**) **by March 2022.** With the synthesis of all the contributions from around the world, The central team will then use the summaries from all over the world to produce a document that the Focolare Movement will present to the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops.

Work of the Central Team to respond to the request of the Secretariat of the Synod

- a. To receive from zone contacts all responses, input, reflections and experiences by **end of April 2022.**
- b. To produce the *Focolare Movement's Contribution to the Synod*, to be sent to the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops and to be made public on the Focolare Movement's Indy platform **by June 2022.**

4 To encourage listening and dialogue: when asked, we question ourselves

Methodology of listening, dialogue and discernment in the synodal journey

In order to facilitate a fruitful moment of discernment, it is advisable to hold **at least two meetings** in each community (focolare, nucleus, gen unit, group, local community, etc.).

The first meeting could be the occasion to answer questions following a **time of attentive listening and engagement** in which the most important element is *parresia*, that is, the sincerity that comes from the awareness of the co-responsibility of belonging to the community of the movement. Each member of the community will

be able to express themselves and give their specific contribution in a mutual comparison and listening.

The **second meeting** could be a **time of sharing and expression of common feelings and thoughts, a convergence of attention on what emerged** in the first meeting in order to be able to offer it as the **fruit of community discernment**. In this second meeting the questions could be answered **together** using and responding to the questions found at the end of this document.

What are the experiences of our community that we feel we share? What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects for change, the steps to be taken?

Keeping in mind that **synodality is a “constitutive dimension of the Church”** and that for the movement the **starting point is mutual love and the finishing point is the presence of Jesus among us**, these meetings will try to discern the style in which we live and work ordinarily, the structures, the community processes and the projects and events. **In the two meetings as a whole - and in addition to giving specific answers to the questions and to the central themes of the consultation tool - we are asked to ask ourselves:** *what are the experiences of our community that we feel we share? What joys have we given to others? What difficulties and obstacles have we encountered? What wounds and what insights have we caused? What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects for change, the steps to be taken?*

Instrument of synodal consultation

In order to encourage the process of mutual listening and community discernment, the following questions are proposed. They contain **five central themes**. They summarise those proposed by the *Preparatory Document* of the Synod and **some questions** are specific **to each topic**. We ask that your answers do not exceed 500 characters. You may also add a **short contribution of reflection** or sharing of an experience of no more than 1000 characters. The questions can be **answered in a simple Word document to be sent to the central team**.

The questions linked to each topic are intended to be a stimulus for reflection and create an awareness of the spirit that animates participation. Therefore, you can also send an overall response based upon what emerges during the time of reflection.

Central topics and questions regarding the synodal journey in communities and units

1 PATH AND MISSION

1.a: ✓ *When we think about our community*: who do we think are “our fellow travellers”?*

With which people or groups do we feel we are journeying together and which, in fact, do we exclude in our projects and in our sharing of experiences?

** focolare, nucleus, gen unit, group, local community, etc.*

1.b: ✓ *How can we foster choices and decisions supported by the community and help those who participate and are engaged in service to society* or in specific service in the Church or religious community to which they belong?*

** In social and political commitment, in scientific research and teaching, in social justice, in the protection of human rights and the care of creation, etc.*

2 WORD AND EUCHARIST

2.a: ✓ *What is our communicative style: is there mutual, free, authentic, transparent listening, without “hypocrisy”? How can everyone who comes into contact with us really be heard?*

2.b: ✓ *How do we ensure that our meetings are not stereotyped and that the participation of all is truly active?*

How do we share our hearing of the Word and our experiences?

What spaces for prayer do we generate? How do we live the Eucharistic celebration in community?

3 LISTENING AND DIALOGUE

3.a: ✓ *What are the obstacles to listening to the “cry of humani-*

ty”: women, children, the elderly, minorities; of people rejected and excluded who live close to us?

3.b: ✓ *How do we welcome the contribution of people who do not think like us, inside and outside the community, recognizing differences of opinion, conflicts and difficulties as opportunities for dialogue, discernment and change?*

3.c: ✓ *How do we aim at collaboration with religious communities, associations and movements, with Christian people and Churches, with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious beliefs, in order to achieve a “dialogue of life”, capable of affecting society, politics, economy, culture?*

4 COMMUNITY DISCERNMENT

4.a: ✓ *Do we try to carry out community discernment that allows for transparent and shared decisions, the fruit of participatory action in our community? How?*

How do we identify the goals to be pursued as a community and the steps to be taken?

How is authority exercised in the community?

4.b: ✓ *What attention do we give and what methods do we use in formation to “journeying together” (to listening and dialogue, to discernment and to the way of exercising and collaborating with those who have responsibility in the community)?*

5 THE SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION AS A COMMUNITY OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT

5.a: ✓ *How do we build bridges of unity in society, in the family, in politics, for a just economy, environmental sustainability, looking to the goal of “ut omnes”?*

To pursue these goals, how do we manage to network with other ecclesial and social realities working in the same fields, overcoming the temptation of self-absorption?

How do we welcome the contribution of people who do not think like us?

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5.b: ✓ *Are decision-making processes the fruit of a life of communion-fellowship, based on sincerity, collaboration and attention to the inclusion of all, in a true family spirit?*

Are we careful to value the opportunities for clarification that arise from the different and divergent opinions among us?

How is leadership exercised within these processes?

5.c: ✓ *How do we in our community contribute to the specific purpose of the dialogues and how do we listen to the experiences of those among us who belong to other Churches, religions or are of other beliefs?*

What concrete initiatives in our community do we put in place for collaboration with people of other Christian Churches, religions, or other beliefs?

6 A FREE CONTRIBUTION (reflection or experience-max 1000 characters)

**Let us live
the pre-
synodal
journey
together
with, with
joy and
commitment**

Let us live the pre-synodal journey together with, with joy and commitment, in the awareness of this important time for the Church and humanity.

The Central Team:

Claudio Guerrieri, Eva Gullo, Francisco Canzani, Liliane Mugombozi, Loli García, Pablo Blanco, Vania Cheng, don Vincenzo Di Pilato.

Rocca di Papa, 17 April 2021

NOTES FROM THE PREPARATORY DOCUMENT SYNOD 2021 - 2023

<https://www.synod.va/it/news/documento-preparatorio.html>

[A link to the pdf of the text in English can be found on the same page.]

»» INTRODUCTION

Pope Francis invites the entire Church to reflect on a theme that is decisive for its life and mission: “It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.”

A basic question prompts and guides us: 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? Addressing this question together requires listening to the Holy Spirit.

The nature of the Church as the People of God: being pilgrim and missionary. Synodality as the form, the style, and the structure of the Church, asks us:

- to remember how the Spirit has guided the Church’s journey through history and calls us today to be witnesses of God’s love together;
- to live a participatory and inclusive ecclesial process that offers everyone - especially those who for various reasons find themselves on the margins - the opportunity to express themselves and to be heard in order to contribute to the building up of the People of God;
- Recognize and appreciate the richness and variety of the gifts and charisms which the Spirit bestows in freedom, for the good of the community and for the benefit of the entire human family;
- to experiment with participatory ways of exercising responsibility in the proclamation of the Gospel and in the commitment to build a more beautiful and habitable world;

To live a participatory and inclusive ecclesial process that offers everyone the opportunity to express themselves and to be

- examine how responsibility and power are lived in the Church, and the structures by which they are managed, bringing out and trying to convert prejudices and distorted practices that are not rooted in the Gospel;
- accredit the Christian community as a credible subject and reliable partner in paths of social dialogue, healing, reconciliation, inclusion and participation, reconstruction of democracy, promotion of fraternity and social friendship;
- to regenerate relationships among the members of Christian communities as well as between communities and other social groups, e.g. communities of believers of other faiths and religions, civil society organizations, popular movements, etc.;
- to foster the appreciation and appropriation of the fruits of recent synodal experiences at universal, regional, national and local levels.

The Preparatory Document:

- 1) begins by outlining some prominent characteristics of the contemporary context;
- 2) synthetically illustrates the fundamental theological references for a correct understanding and practice of synodality;
- 3) offers some biblical thoughts that can nourish meditation and prayerful reflection along the way;
- 4) illustrates some perspectives from which to reread the experiences of lived synodality;
- 5) shows some ways of articulating this work of rereading in prayer and sharing.

»» THE CALL TO JOURNEY TOGETHER

The synodal journey unfolds within a historical context marked by epochal changes in society and by a crucial transition in the life of the Church: we are called to “scrutinize the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel”.

A global tragedy such as the COVID-19 pandemic “momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same

boat, where one person's problems are the problems of all. Once more we realized that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together" (FT, no. 32). At the same time, the pandemic has also made the already existing inequalities and inequities explode: humanity seems increasingly shaken by processes of massification and fragmentation; the tragic condition faced by migrants in all regions of the world shows how high and strong the barriers dividing the single human family still are."

We cannot ignore the variety of conditions in which Christian communities live in the different regions of the world. ... If, on the one hand, a secularized mentality tends to expel religion from the public space, on the other hand, religious fundamentalism, without respect for the liberties of others, feeds forms of intolerance and violence that are also reflected in the Christian community and in its relations with society. ... including ... the fractures caused by reasons of ethnicity, race, caste, or other forms of social stratification or cultural and structural violence.

This situation challenges the Church's ability to accompany individuals and communities, and it must also address the lack of faith and corruption within the Church. In particular, we cannot forget the suffering experienced by minors and vulnerable people due to abuse, a cry that the Church has not been able to hear sufficiently, added to a culture imbued with clericalism, which it inherits from its history, and forms of exercise of authority.

In spite of our infidelities, new languages of faith and new paths are flourishing, capable not only of interpreting events from a theological point of view, but also of finding in trials the reasons for re-founding the path of Christian and ecclesial life. More than a few Churches have already begun more or less structured meetings and consultation processes with the People of God. There is also confirmation of the desire of young people to take be protagonists in the Church and the request for a greater appreciation of women.

The choice to "journey together" is a prophetic sign for the human family, which needs a shared project capable of pursuing the good of all. The Church must enter with courage and freedom of heart into a process of conversion, be capable of communion and

fraternity, of participation and subsidiarity, in fidelity to what she proclaims, in order to place herself at the side of the poor and the least and lend them her own voice.

»» A CHURCH CONSTITUTIVELY SYNODAL

Synodality, in this perspective, is much more than the celebration of ecclesial meetings and Bishops' assemblies, or a matter of simple internal administration within the Church; it is "the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church, the People of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelizing mission."

Within this ecclesial horizon, inspired by the principle of the participation of all in the life of the Church, that St. John Chrysostom could say: "Church and Synod are synonymous". Therefore, all the Baptized, participants in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions by "exercising the variety and ordered richness of their charisms, their vocations and their ministries,"^[15] are active subjects of evangelization, both individually and as the entire People of God.

The whole holy people of God grows in understanding and experience "both of the things and of the words transmitted, whether by the contemplation and study of believers who treasure these things in their hearts (cf. Lk 2:19 and 51), or by the understanding given by a deeper experience of spiritual things, or by the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth".

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. In other words, this is an ecclesial process that can only take place "at the heart of a hierarchically structured community."

The meaning of the journey to which we are all called is above all that of discovering the face and form of a synodal Church, 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*).”

A synodal Church is a Church “going forth,” a missionary Church “whose doors are open” (EG, no. 46). This includes the call to deepen relationships with other Churches and Christian communities, with which we are united by the one Baptism. The perspective of “journeying together,” then, is even broader, and embraces all humankind, whose “joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties” we share (GS, no. 1).

Practicing synodality is today for the Church the most evident way to be “the universal sacrament of salvation”.

Even in the diversity of the Lord’s calls, their receptive responses, the common trait is that faith always emerges as a valuing of people

»» LISTENING TO THE SCRIPTURES

One emerges in the representation of the “community scene” that constantly accompanies the journey of evangelization; the other refers to the experience of the Spirit in which Peter and the early community recognize the risk of placing unjustified limits on faith sharing.

In various ways, Jesus pays special attention to those who are “separated” from God and those “abandoned” by the community (the sinners and the poor, in gospel language). Through his words and actions, he offers liberation from evil and conversion to hope, in the name of God the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Even in the diversity of the Lord’s calls, their receptive responses, the common trait is that faith always emerges as a valuing of people.

The election of the apostles is not the privilege of an exclusive position of power and separation but the grace of an inclusive ministry of blessing and fellowship. The passage from the conversion of Cornelius shows us that no human being is unworthy in the eyes of God and the difference instituted by election is not exclusive preference, but service and witness of universal breadth. Scripture helps to interpret the meaning.

Jesus, the crowd in its diversity, the apostles: this is the imagery and the mystery that must be constantly contemplated and explored in depth so that the Church may increasingly become what she is.

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»» SYNODALITY IN ACTION: PATHS FOR THE CONSULTATION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Enlightened by the Word and grounded in Tradition, the synodal path is rooted in the concrete life of the People of God.

The fundamental question that guides this consultation of the People of God, as already mentioned at the beginning, is the following: A synodal Church, announcing the Gospel, “journeys together”. How is this “journeying together” happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

To respond we are invited to:

- a. ask ourselves what experiences of our particular Church the fundamental question calls to mind;
- b. reread these experiences in greater depth: what joys have we caused? What difficulties and obstacles have we encountered? What wounds have we brought to light? What insights have we elicited?
- c. gather the fruits to share: where in these experiences does the voice of the Spirit resound? What is he asking of us? What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects for change, the steps to be taken? Where do we register a consensus? What paths are opening up for our particular Church?

In the prayer, reflection and sharing provoked by the fundamental question, it is opportune to keep in mind three levels on which synodality is articulated as a “constitutive dimension of the Church”:

- *the level of the style in which the Church ordinarily lives and works*, which expresses its nature as the People of God that journeys together and gathers in assembly summoned by the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel;

- *the level of ecclesial structures and processes*, determined also from the theological and canonical point of view, in which the synodal nature of the Church is expressed in an institutional way at the local, regional and universal levels;

- *the level of synodal processes and events* in which the Church is convoked by the competent authority, according to specific procedures determined by the ecclesiastical discipline.

The style of synodality easily degrades from the level of intentions and desires to that of rhetoric, while processes and events, if they are not animated by an adequate style, turn out to be empty formalities.

Furthermore, in re-reading the experiences, it is necessary to keep in mind that “journeying together” can be understood from two different perspectives, which are strongly interconnected. The first looks at the internal life of the particular Churches, at the relationships between their constituent parts. The second perspective considers how the People of God journey together with the whole human family.

The spirituality of journeying together is called to become an educational principle for the formation of the human person

»» TEN THEMATIC NUCLEI TO BE EXPLORED

They articulate different facets of “lived synodality”:

I. THE JOURNEYING COMPANIONS: In our local Church, who are the ones “journeying together”? When we say “our Church,” who is part of it?

II. LISTENING: Listening is the first step, but it requires having an open mind and heart, without prejudice. To whom does our particular Church “need to listen to”?

III. SPEAKING OUT: All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, integrating freedom, truth and charity. How do we promote this within the community?

IV. CELEBRATING: “Journeying together” is possible only if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist. How do prayer and liturgical celebration effectively inspire and guide our “journeying together”?

V. CORRESPONSIBLE IN THE MISSION: Synodality is at the service of the Church’s mission, in which all her members are called to participate. How is each baptized person called to be a protagonist in the mission?

VI. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY: Dialogue is a path of perseverance that also includes silences and sufferings, but which is capable of gathering the experience of persons and peoples. What are the places and modes of dialogue within our particular Church?

SYNODAL 2023

The purpose of the Synod I allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationship

VII. WITH OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS: The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one Baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey. What relations do we have with our brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations?

VIII. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION: A synodal Church is a participatory and co-responsible Church. How do we identify the objectives to be pursued, the way to achieve them and the steps to be taken?

IX. DISCERNING AND DECIDING: In a synodal style decisions are made through discernment, based on a consensus that flows from the common obedience to the Spirit. By what procedures and methods do we discern together and make decisions?

X. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY: The spirituality of journeying together is called to become an educational principle for the formation of the human person and of the Christian, of families and communities. How do we form people, especially those who have roles of responsibility within the Christian community, to make them more capable of “journeying together”, listening to one another and engaging in dialogue?

»» TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE CONSULTATION

The purpose of the first phase of the synodal journey is to foster a broad consultation process in order to gather the wealth of the experiences of lived synodality, in its different articulations and facets, involving the Pastors and the Faithful of the particular Churches at all the different levels, through the most appropriate means according to the specific local realities.

The purpose of the Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but “to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands.”

The synthesis that each particular Church will elaborate at the end of this work of listening and discernment will constitute its contribution to the journey of the universal Church.