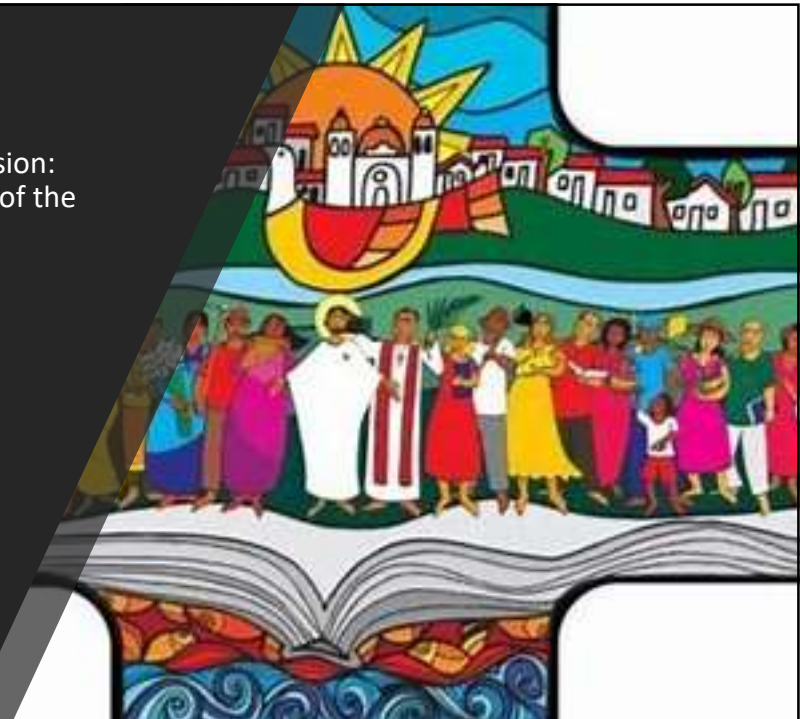


Synodality

The Working Platform:
International Theological Commission:
Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church (2018)

Synod of Bishops in 2023

Synodality



Pope Francis has invited the whole Church to discuss ten topics:

- The journeying Church
- Listening
- Speaking Out
- Celebrating
- Co-responsibility
- Dialogue in Church and Society
- With other Christian Denominations
- Authority and Participation
- Discerning and Deciding
- Forming Ourselves in Synodality



Let us therefore work to “spend time with the future”, to take from this Synod not merely a document – that generally is only read by a few and criticized by many – but above all concrete pastoral proposals capable of fulfilling the Synod’s purpose. In other words,

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.

Pope Francis, Address to Young People 2018



It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the church of the third millennium.

Francis, Ceremony
Commemorating the 50th
Anniversary of the Institution of
the Synod of Bishops, 17
October 2015

“Synod” is an ancient and venerable word in the Tradition of the Church, whose meaning draws on the deepest themes of Revelation. Composed of a preposition συν (with) and the noun ὁδός (path), it indicates the path along which the People of God walk together. Equally, it refers to the Lord Jesus, who presents Himself as “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn 14,6), and to the fact that Christians, His followers, were originally called “followers of the Way” (cf. Acts 9,2; 19,9.23; 22,4; 24,14.22).

Saint John Chrysostom, for example, writes that the Church is a “name standing for ‘walking together’ (σύνοδος)”



- Walking is an art; if we are always in a hurry we tire and cannot reach our destination
- Walking is precisely the art of looking to the horizon, thinking about where we want to go.
- In the art of walking it is not falling that matters, but not “staying fallen”. Get up quickly, immediately, and continue to go on.
- But also: it is terrible to walk alone, terrible and tedious. Walking in community, with friends, with those who love us: this helps us, it helps us to arrive precisely at the destination where we must arrive.



Pope Frances, Address to the students of Jesuit Schools of Italy and Albania, June 7th 2013

Towards a Theology of Synodality

- Trinitarian : The Church is One because she has as her source, her model and her goal in the unity of the Blessed Trinity (cf. John 17,21-22).
- Synodality manifests the 'pilgrim' character of the Church.
- The Church is called, in synodal synergy, to activate the ministries and charisms present in her life and to listen to the voice of the Spirit, in order to discern her mission and outreach.
- Synodality is a living expression of the Catholicity of the Church as communion.



The consultation that takes place in synodal assemblies is actually different, because the members of the People of God who take part in them are responding to the summons of the Lord, listening as a community to what the Spirit is saying to the Church through the Word of God which resonates in their situation, and interpreting the signs of the times with the eyes of faith. In the synodal Church the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on taking pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will. (68)



Pastoral conversion for the implementation of synodality means that some paradigms often still present in ecclesiastical culture need to be quashed, because they express an understanding of the Church that has not been renewed by the ecclesiology of communion. These include: the concentration of responsibility for mission in the ministry of Pastors; insufficient appreciation of the consecrated life and charismatic gifts; rarely making use of the specific and qualified contribution of the lay faithful, including women, in their areas of expertise. (105)

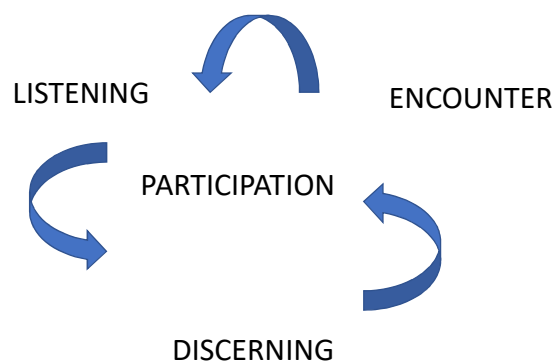


Listening and dialogue for communal discernment

Synodal dialogue depends on courage both in speaking and in listening. It about expressing whatever seems to have been suggested by the Holy Spirit as useful for communal discernment, at the same time being open to accepting whatever has been suggested by the same Spirit in other people's positions, "for the general good" (1 Corinthians 12,7). (111)

Exercising discernment is at the heart of synodal processes and events. (113)

Communal discernment implies carefully and courageously listening to "the groans" of the Spirit (cf. Romans 8,26) Discernment must be carried out in a space of prayer, meditation, reflection and study, which we need to hear the voice of the Spirit; by means of sincere, serene and objective dialogue with our brothers and sisters; by paying attention to the real experiences and challenges of every community and every situation; in the melting-pot of feelings and thoughts that enable us to understand the Lord's will; by searching to be set free by the Gospel from any obstacle that might weaken our openness to the Spirit. (114)



1. Reflect
2. Share your own reflection
3. Listen to each participant in the group
4. Reflect
5. Share what you have heard and has what has stood out for you

How and where have you experienced walking with others as part of a faith community?

What was it like for you? What did it feel like? What changed for you?

How did you experience God in this walking together?