

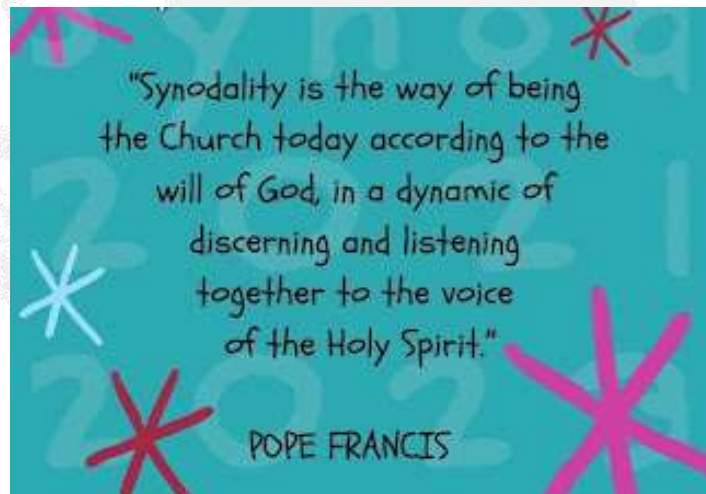


Synod
2021
2024

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission



Synodality, a dynamic vision of the Church in history



“Synodality is the dynamic dimension, the historical dimension of ecclesial communion founded by Trinitarian communion, which, appreciating simultaneously the *sensus fidei* of all God's holy faithful people, apostolic collegiality and unity with the Successor of Peter, must animate the conversion and reform of the Church at every level.”

Pope Francis,

Message for the Plenary Assembly of the Commission for Latin America, May 26 2022
<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2022/05/26/0398/00830.html>

A Church on the move calling for a communication on the move





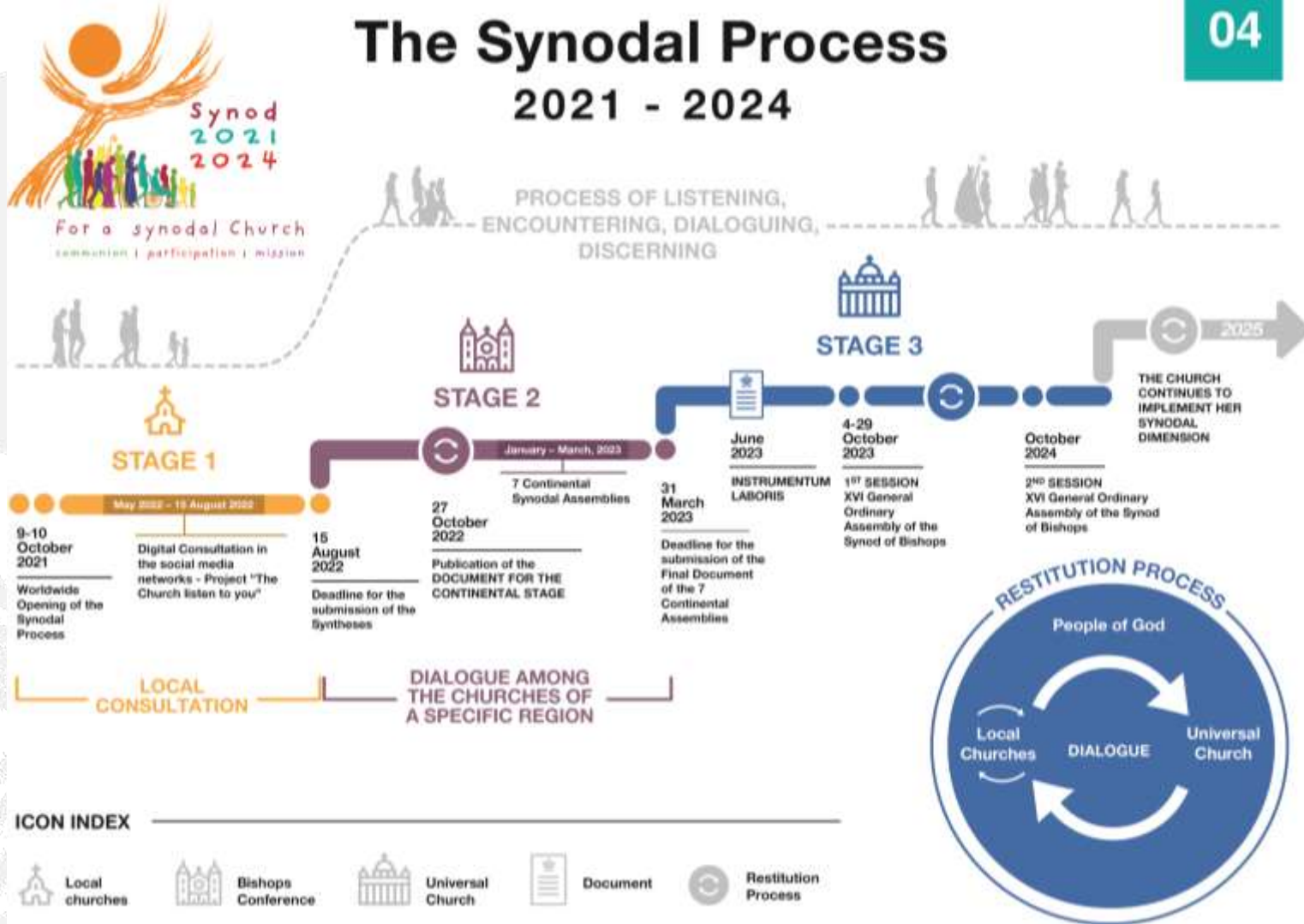
The synodal process

A process of communication

Communication is at the heart of the synod

The Synodal Process

2021 - 2024



An historical process of dialogue

- The heart of these synodal experiences was listening to God through listening to each other, inspired by the Word of God. We then asked to collect in a "synthesis" the fruits of prayer and reflection that emerged during these synod experiences.
 - 112 bishops' conferences (out of 114), of the all 15 Catholic Oriental Churches, 17 Roman Dicasteries, the superiors of the religious orders and congregations, different lay movements and associations. More than 110.000 contributions (for almost 20.000.000 of people reached) by the initiative "Digital Synod" thank to the many influencers who got young people to participate.
 - From all these data, we are convinced that **we are facing an ecclesial dialogue without precedent in the history of the Church**, not only for the quantity of responses received or the number of people involved (which to some who want to rely solely on numbers may seem limited) but also for the quality of participation.
- At the core of the synod, a process of wording → relationships between language and spiritual/ecclesial experience
- **Synodality calls for "a reconfiguration in the relations and communicative dynamics"** (Rafael Luciani)



“Enlarge the space of your tent”

(Is 54:2)

WORKING DOCUMENT
FOR THE CONTINENTAL STAGE



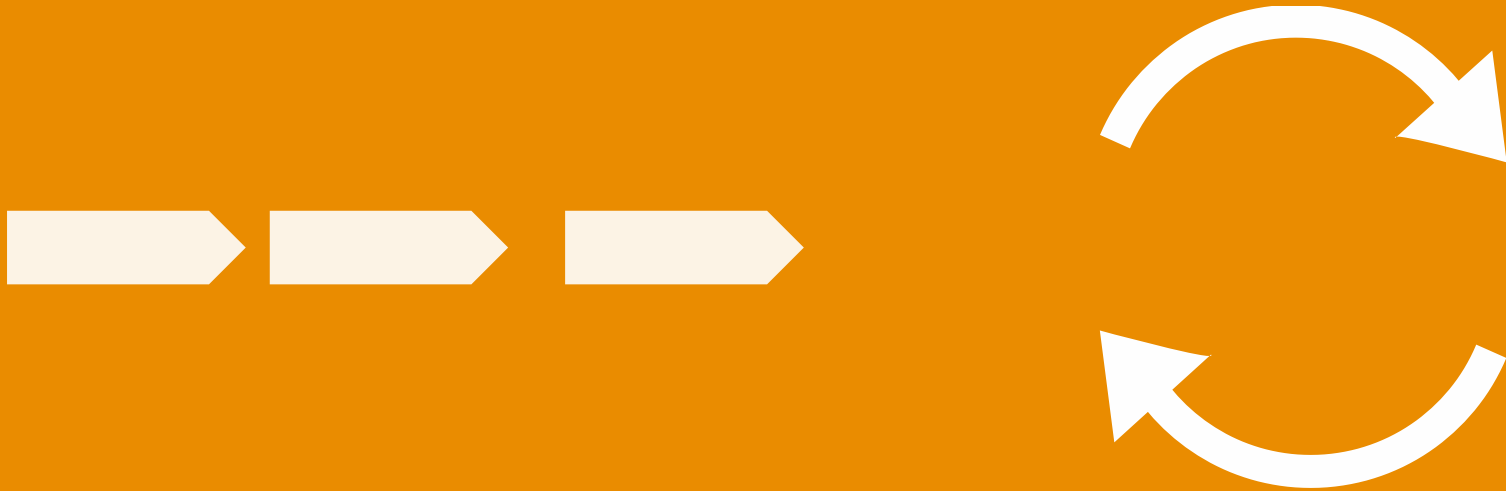
GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE SYNOD



www.synod.va

The Synod on Synodality

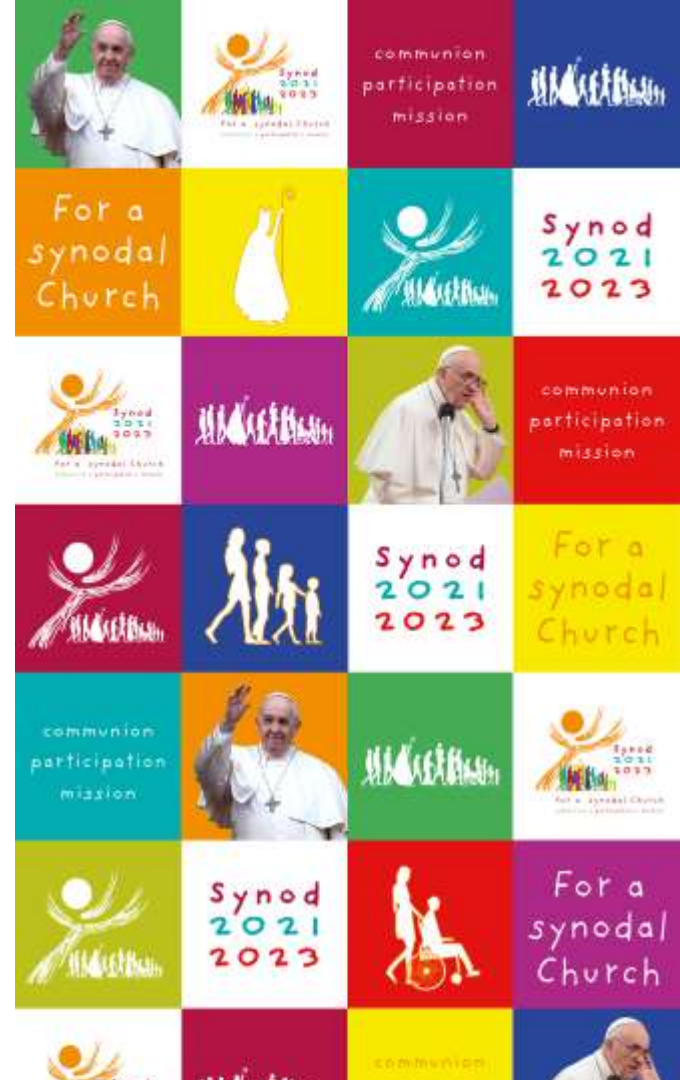
From an event to a process



A 3 years project
A great story to tell

A great story to tell

- The world's oldest continuing institution, widely seen in the secular world as stuck in the past and beset with problems, has embarked on something new and bold and unprecedented:
- A global listening process open to everyone and aimed at renewing our ability to live out our mission in our own particular times and places, a mission centered most of all on humble service, as the Pope Francis reminds us, to "those lying wounded by the roadside." This should set our hearts afire; it is an inspiring call.



A new style of Church, a listening Church

iescuta #ListeningChurch #ChiesainAscolto #IglesiaQueEscucha #KościółSłuchający
alto #KishaNeDegjim #ListeningChurch #EgliseEnÉcoute #Chiesainascolto #Kisha
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#BaznīcaKaskla #ingChurch #ЦеркваЩоСлухає #OBisericainascultare



Symbolic image of the Youth Synod" Emmaüs

"Walking together, like Christ with the pilgrims of Emmaüs"

See/Listening/Recognizing - Judge/Interpreting - Act/Discerning/Choosing



Listening to the voice of the People of God on communication

II. LISTENING

Listening is the first step, but it requires having an open mind and heart, without prejudices. To whom does our particular Church “need to listen to”? How are the Laity, especially young people and women, listened to? How do we integrate the contribution of Consecrated Men and Women? What space is there for the voice of minorities, the discarded, and the excluded? Do we identify prejudices and stereotypes that hinder our listening? **How do we listen to the social and cultural context in which we live?**

III. SPEAKING OUT

All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, integrating freedom, truth, and charity. **How do we promote a free and authentic style of communication within the community and its organizations, without duplicity and opportunism?** And in relation to the society of which we are a part? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us? **How does the relationship with the media system (not only Catholic media) work? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?**

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.

A call for listening and dialogue

- **Listening should be the starting point of communication.** It is necessary to restore the confidence of the faithful by organizing regular opportunities for exchange, days of welcome and listening and by revaluing the service of spiritual accompaniment.
BC Rwanda
- The results of the meeting of the Synod in the diocesan phase were very fruitful proposals for the Catholic Church in Thailand, resulting from listening to God's people at all levels. **In particular, the process of listening and dialogue from the grassroots of God's people (cf. Decree... 29) bridged the gap through peaceful communication.** It brought reciprocal consolation and it introduced new ideas for participation in a variety of ways, such as person-to-person interviews, the use of modern communication technology, so that everyone can participate in giving their opinions, suggestions and experiences.
BC Thailand

A call for better communication

Communication

- **Synodal consultations frequently expressed a hope for the Church to commit to strengthening communication.** Many commented that *“improvement in communication between (arch)dioceses and parishes, between parishes and parishioners, and between parishes in the same (arch)dioceses, could lead to unity and reduce the spread of misinformation.”* **Other consultations saw the Church’s use of digital media as essential to bringing the faith to the public square.** One synthesis noted the Church’s need for improvement in *“using media and technology for communications to serve in missionary discipleship —sharing the gospel— and covering geographic distances, to serve as the Church’s voice in social and political arenas, and to be a place to learn demographics and needs and connect the Church and society.”* (...)
- **Several reflected on the importance of clear communication, especially in the digital space, for reaching out to and engaging young people.** Nearly all synodal consultations cautioned, however, that the Church and Catholic media engage in social and digital communications in ways that are both responsible and respectful, avoiding falling into ideologies that exacerbate division. *“Reports noted the great variety of outstanding Catholic media and digital resources, but they also lamented the challenge of identifying responsible Catholic media. Among the concerns expressed with media, it was observed that the most prominent perspectives are often the most divisive or sensationalist. Media is likely to report on hot-button issues, not the consistent ministry regularly provided by Catholic parishes and organizations. Our use of media increasingly serves to reinforce our preconceived notions or preferred ideology.”*
- **More poignantly, nearly all of the synodal consultations saw clear, concise, and consistent communication as key to the strong desire for appropriate transparency.** *“The general category of transparency was mentioned over and over again: Transparency in the sex abuse crisis, transparency in making difficult decisions, transparency in financial matters, transparency in admitting when something goes wrong, transparency in planning, transparency in leadership. Transparency brings accountability which many people feel is lacking in the Church. To be a trustworthy Church, transparency is going to need to be an essential component in every level and aspect.”* As the Church seeks to continue down the synodal path, a commitment to clear, transparent, and consistent communication will be crucial. *“One key to improving collaboration among clergy and laity will be communication. Lay members in quite a few dioceses said they want greater transparency regarding decision making.”*

A call for transparency

- DCS 20. An obstacle of particular relevance on the path of walking together is the scandal of abuse by members of the clergy or by people who held ecclesial office: first and foremost, abuse of minors and vulnerable persons, but also abuse of other kinds (spiritual, sexual, economic, of authority, of conscience). This is an open wound that continues to inflict pain on victims and survivors, on their families, and on their communities: *“There was ongoing reference to the impact of the clergy sexual abuse crisis and the Church's response [...]. For many, the aftermath of this is still a powerful, unresolved issue. There was a strong urgency to acknowledge the horror and damage, and to strengthen efforts to safeguard the vulnerable, repair damage to the moral authority of the Church and rebuild trust. Some Dioceses reported that participants wished for them publicly to acknowledge and atone for past abuses”* (EC Australia). **Careful and painful reflection on the legacy of abuse has led many synod groups to call for a cultural change in the Church with a view to greater transparency, accountability and co-responsibility.**
- DCS 79. **In different parts of the world, transparency is seen as an essential practice for a Church growing into a more authentic synodality:** *“The Catholic Church needs to become more open and transparent, everything is done in secret. Parish Council agendas and minutes are never published, financial committee decisions never discussed or balance sheets shared”* (individual observation from UK). **Transparency will propel toward true accountability of all decision-making processes, including the criteria used for discernment.** A style of leadership anchored in a synodal way of proceeding will produce trust and credibility: *“On some issues, the exercise of authority is effectively collegial, through consultation with the bodies embedded in the various structures of administration, management and pastoral animation [...]. But it is sometimes sad to note that in our Catholic Church there are bishops, priests, catechists, community leaders ..., who are very authoritarian. [...] Instead of serving the community, some serve themselves with unilateral decisions, and this hinders our synodal journey”* (EC Chad). In addition, many reports note the need to involve people with adequate professional competence in the management of economic and governance issues.

A call for new languages

- **Communication** ▪ The Church needs to update its language and bring the value of its symbols up to date, because words create realities. Certain names, titles, ways of appearing that express greatness and power do not resonate in a synodal key... ▪ **Synodality requires striving for adequate and better communication throughout the Church**, and the need for a more rapid translation of its main texts to inspire all Christian communities.

UISG-USG

- **A Church that communicates in a deficient way internally and externally, reacting more than proposing, more informative than communicative.** And for this reason the perception of the Church's communication is divergent: some consider it successful from an informative point of view, but with little reach, as well as too reactive, not suggesting a different agenda, according to the criteria and language of the Gospel; **It is important to renew our way of communicating by promoting a more careful language, open and adapted to reality, capable of clarifying the content of the faith, and which regularly uses digital communication and social networks for better evangelization, outreach and proximity.**

BC Portugal

A call for participation through a creative communication

24. **To promote greater grassroots participation, communication needs to be improved**, the basis for consultations broadened, and consultations held more regularly.

The Church must also communicate widely about its initiatives and activities. It should not be afraid to make its voice heard while remaining responsive to the world. To do this, a dynamic and creative communications unit must be put in place. (...)

31. There are still some areas for improvement. These include, among others, the training of leaders, the provision of time for evangelization, the availability and motivation of pastors, the recruitment of a large number of lay people for specific missions, without forgetting the important question of communication. Not taking all these factors into account weakens the mission of evangelization and does not favor its good accomplishment. This mission will find all its credibility through the witness of life.

BC Côte d'Ivoire

The challenge regarding social media is the propagation of values that are not coherent with the Gospel: consumerism, lack of love, violence, divergence with Christian values. More expressive is the perception of the importance of social networks in the dissemination of fake news and the reinforcement of polarization. Furthermore, few people are prepared and qualified to manage social media, so, although parishes have inserted themselves in these media, they have only had an informative character without being adequately used to their full potential. **It is necessary, therefore, to take care of the formation for the use of the media, especially for pious communication in the social networks, forming people to identify and not to pass on frauds.**

BC Brazil

A new style of communication



The change in 3 images the Council Vatican I



The Council Vatican II



Synods and synodality with Pope Francis



A learning church, "becoming synodal", a long path

"The Second Vatican Council gives an ideal of synodal and episcopal communion. We still have to make it grow, including at the parish level with regard to what is prescribed. There are parishes that have neither a pastoral council nor a council for economic affairs even though the Code of Canon Law obliges them to do so. Synodality is also at stake here."

Entretien exclusif de la Croix (Guillaume Goubert et Sébastien Maillard) avec le Pape François, 17 mai 2016 <https://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Pape/Entretien-exclusif-avec-pape-Francois-integralite-2016-05-17-1200760636>

- "To prayer and closeness, I would like to add a third word, which is very familiar to you: synodality. To be Church is to be a community that walks together. **It is not enough to have a synod, it is necessary to be a synod. The Church needs an intense inner sharing: a living dialogue between pastors and between pastors and the faithful.**"

Discours du pape François aux responsables de l'Église gréco-catholique ukrainienne, 5 juillet 2019 www.synod.va

Key learning points for communication

- The impact of symbolic gestures and images to give signals of change
 - Logo, Preparatory Document... the form carries the message
- The importance of listening to the grassroots to understand the situation and learn best-practices from them
- Need to empower, to liberate the liberty and to foster synergies between all church levels
- Creativity and innovation come more from the grassroots
- Importance of network and platforms to share resources, initiatives and best practices <https://www.synodresources.org/>
- The center and the peripheries in interaction within a vision of circularity
- A circular relationships between the center and the local churches
- Inputs from the Vatican and local adaptation
 - the center as a « hub » to give impulses and signs, to discern and name what is happening
- Listening, dialogue and communication at all levels and between all levels :
 - Changes happen by capillarity through this circularity

Towards an integral & integrated communication

→ The key of circularity

- Importance of relationships and networks
- Need to integrate communication at the core of synodality and communicators as part of governance
- Empowerment of all the baptized who are potential communicators for synodality
- Call for new ministries for the digital world
 - Reflection on the role of influencers

The key role of communicators

- To promote and explain synodality
- To share experiences of Synodality
 - a living experience, a spiritual experience, a transformative experience
- To implement synodality in communication teams
- To listen and give voice to the poorest, the excluded, the peripheries, those who have no voice.
- To highlight stories and images of synodality

10 tips from the synod commission on communication

- (1) Reframe conversations to promote dialogue:
- (2) Context is key.
- (3) Manage expectations, particularly about outcomes.
- (4) Substance drives communication.
- (5) Keep it human: tell a story, and tell stories.
- (6) Keep it concrete.
- (7) Keep it clear.
- (8) Keep it coherent.
- (9) Keep it simple and keep it short.
- (10) Be patient, face the tensions

Media-training with Kim Daniels

Discerning ways to communicate about the synod & synodality

- To answer the call to be a synodal Church, missionary, fraternal and merciful
- An open path, a creative path to be discerned
- Through an on-going process of conversion



Towards a synodal communication

- “Christianity should always be **human and accessible, reconciling differences and distances**, turning them into **familiarity and proximity**.” Pope Francis
 - In this synodal **process we will pray together, listen together, learn together, and move forward together** in order to **better live our mission to love God and our neighbors**, especially those “**lying wounded by the roadside**.”
 - Effective communications **is at the heart of our work together because it is at the heart of encounter, listening, and discernment**.
 - The Holy Father is our model here, and as he has said, **the root of all credible, effective communication is not marketing and strategizing**, but a “**clear and decisive focus**” on our **Gospel mission**.

Becoming a synodal communicative community

- 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.** A special case in point is represented by universities and academic institutions, which will be able to develop research addressing questions of synodality, helping to innovate in the design of educational and formation programmes. In particular, theological faculties will be able to deepen the ecclesiological, Christological and Pneumatological insights that synodal experiences and practices bring.



Liturgy as an important place of communication

A call for more synodal liturgies

- **93. The reports do not fail to point out the main shortcomings of the actual celebratory praxis, which obscure its synodal effectiveness.** In particular, the following are emphasized: the liturgical protagonism of the priest and the risk of the passivity of the wider liturgical community; poor preaching, including the distance between the content of the sermon, the beauty of faith and the concreteness of life; and the separation between the liturgical life of the assembly and the family network of the community. The quality of homilies is almost unanimously reported as a problem: there is a call for *“deeper homilies, centered on the Gospel and the readings of the day, and not on politics, making use of accessible and attractive language that refers to the lives of the faithful”* (Maronite Church).
- **A synodal style of celebrating**
- **95.** At the same time, the synod process represented an opportunity to experience anew the diversity in forms of prayer and celebration, increasing the desire to make it more accessible in the ordinary life of communities. The French report gives voice to three aspirations: *“the first [...] concerns the diversification of liturgies to the benefit of celebrations of the Word, that is, moments of prayer that place meditation on biblical texts at the centre. The second, less frequent, recalls the importance of pilgrimages and popular piety. The third calls for a renewed liturgical formation, to address a problem reported by many reports, namely the incomprehensibility of the language normally used by the Church”* (EC France). Some regions raise the question of the reform of the liturgy, even in the Oriental Churches where it is profoundly linked to the identity of the Church: *“In our Church, a liturgical reform is opportune, so as to re-read in the light of the Holy Spirit the action and participation of the People of God in God's work in our time”* (Greek-Melkite Church).

A polyphonic communication in a symphonic church



Unity through and with diversity

- DCS 102. In the journey of conversion and reform, we are supported by the gifts we have received during the first year of the synodal journey, beginning with what Jesus shows us in the Gospels. The free and gratuitous attention to the other, which is the basis of listening, is not a limited resource to be jealously guarded, but an overflowing source that does not run out, but grows the more we draw from it. **Listening and dialogue are the way to access the gifts that the Spirit offers us through the multifaceted variety of the one Church:** of charisms, of vocations, of talents, of skills, of languages and cultures, of spiritual and theological traditions, of different forms of celebrating and giving thanks. **The reports do not call for uniformity, but ask that we learn to grow in a sincere harmony that helps the baptised fulfil their mission in the world by creating the bonds necessary to walk together joyfully.**



A synodal communication rooted in the Trinitarian dynamic vision of God

- Synodality as an experience of the Trinitarian God
 - A dynamic vision of faith
- A new way to be Church changing our image of God

Towards a dynamic vision of God walking with us that calls for a dynamic&circular vision of munication



Communication for
the Continental phase

Purpose: Not to write 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 and inspire [...] a vision of the future filled with the joy of the Gospel.

...all led by the same overarching Question

”

2. 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? (PD2)

A short-term & long-term process

”

98. The first is the long-term horizon, in which synodality takes the form of a perennial call to personal conversion and reform of the Church.

”

98. The second, clearly at the service of the first, is the one that focuses our attention on the events of the Continental Stage that we experiencing.

An ongoing journey of conversion and reform

“ *We believe that communion must lead us to a permanent state of mission: meeting and listening to each other, dialogue, reflection, discernment together are all actions with positive effects in themselves, but they are not understandable if they are not directed at pushing us to go beyond ourselves and our communities of reference in order to carry out the mission entrusted to us as Church.*
(EC Spain)

“ *The message of our synodal way is simple: we are learning to walk together, and sit together to break the one bread, in such a way that each is able to find their place. Everyone is called to take part in this journey, no one is excluded. To this we feel called so that we can credibly proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to all people. This is the path we seek to continue on in our next Continental Stage.*

“ *To walk in a synodal way, by listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue, has possibly an ‘already and not yet’ dimension, it is there, but much more to be done. The laity are capable, talented and willing to contribute more and more, provided they are given opportunities. Further surveys and studies at the parish level can open up more avenues where the contributions of the laity can be immense and the result would be more vibrant and flourishing Church, which is the goal of synodality* (EC Namibia)

Methodology for the Continental Stage

”

This Document for the Continental Stage (DCS) invites us to take a further step in this spiritual journey “for a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission” and constitutes its point of reference: “Just as the experience of the disciples at Emmaus was only the beginning of their new mission, our synodal process is only a first step” (EC Russian Federation). The continental level constitutes an opportunity to live synodality, which we are still learning to grasp and which we are now invited to practise concretely.



**A time of listening,
encounter and discernment**

**Of all the People of God
and of all local Churches on a
continental basis from the
Document for the Continental
Stage (DCS).**

**A deepening
process**

For the people that represent
the local Churches in the
pre-assembly listening and
discernment processes prior to
each Continental Assembly.



The intent of this stage is to deepen the discernment on what has emerged from the previous stage of local and national listening with **the aim of formulating open questions more accurately, and to better substantiate and flesh out the insights and overall vision, especially from a continental perspective.**



It also wants to be an opportunity to listen to those realities not integrated in the previous stage.



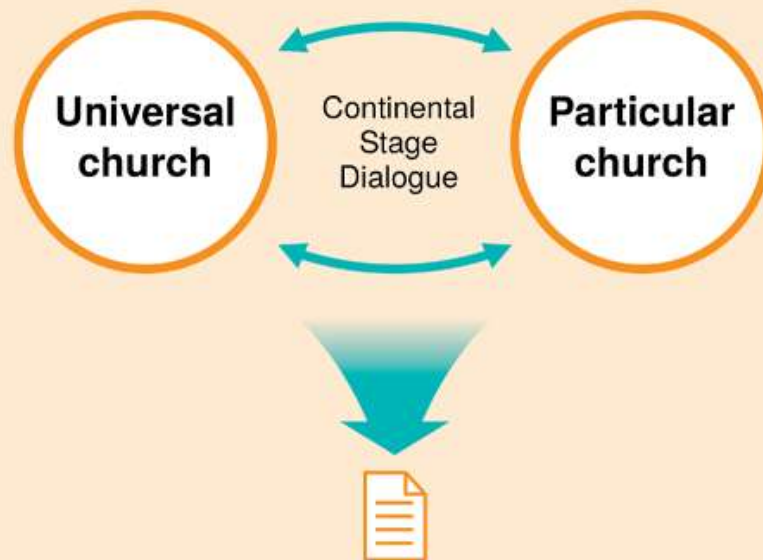
This stage is not yet the time to suggest answers, nor to decide on courses of action. It is a time to DISCERN together in a continental key.

A Dialogical Movement

This stage is part of this **synodal process** to emphasize the dialogue between the universal Church and the particular Church.

- Synodal process -

"How we walk together today"



DOCUMENT FOR THE CONTINENTAL STAGE

A synodal Church is a Church of local Churches with the vision of a mutual dialogue and connection between the universal Church and the particular Church.

It is intended to encourage the creation or strengthening of links of neighbouring Churches and those that are part of specific regions.

Document for the Continental Stage



It was written after careful reflection on the fruits from syntheses of all the Episcopal Conferences of the Universal Church, the Eastern Catholic Churches, and groups such as Religious Institutes, lay movements and so on.



It is a real working document, which should facilitate the work of dialogue, listening and discernment at the continental level.



It is not as a document to be modified in view of the universal stage, **it is as a true guide for an ongoing discernment**, fruit of listening to the People of God.

Participants in the Continental Assemblies*



Ecclesial Assemblies
of the entire People of
God: bishops, priests,
deacons, men and
women religious,
laymen and laywomen.



**Fraternal delegates
from other Christian
denominations.**



**People with no
religious affiliation** but
aware of the importance
of "walking together"
also for our societies.

* The delegations are elected by the Continental Ecclesial Assemblies.



"To understand the synodal process, one must think of a fruitful circularity of prophecy and discernment. The current synodal process is governed by this principle of circularity, guaranteed by an act that makes it operative in ecclesial experience: that of restitution to the Churches, which will take place in the coming months."

Cardinal Mario Grech
(August 26th, 2022)

More information:

<https://www.synod.va/en/resources/infographics.html>

www.synod.va

Main sources: Pope Francis (2020): *Fraxilli tutti* (151) | CIC (320) | Cardinal Grech (2022): Press Conference: the second stage of the synodal process.

Continental Assemblies

For this synod, the subdivision decided for continental assemblies are:



* which will specifically see the contribution of the Eastern Catholic Churches.

Subscribe to our Newsletter visiting our website www.synod.va
or www.synodresources.org

and visit also the Church in Prayer for the Synod www.prayforthesynod.va
(in collaboration with the World Pope's Prayer Network, Click to Pray and the UISG)

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