

«Enlarge the space
of your tent»
(Is 54:2)

Updates on the synod

From Continental assemblies
to the Instrumentum Laboris

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Undersecretary of the General Secretariat of the synod





Synod
2021
2024

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

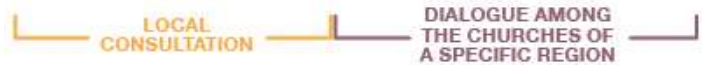
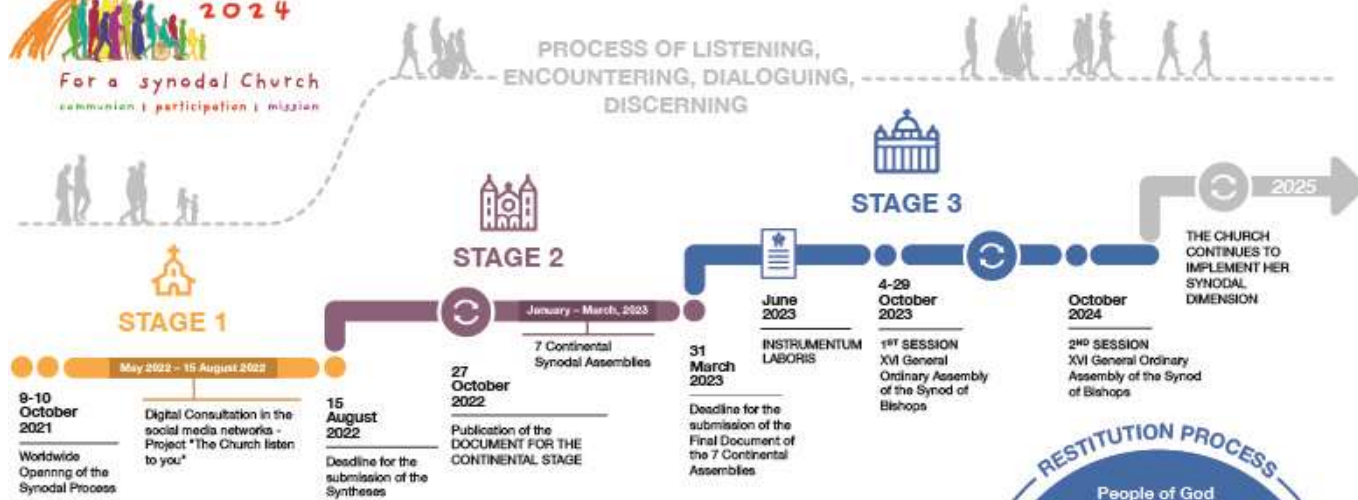




Recap: Synod on Synodality



The Synodal Process 2021 - 2024



ICON INDEX

- Local churches
- Bishops Conference
- Universal Church
- Document
- Restitution Process

Purpose: Not to write documents, but...

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...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

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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)

Becoming a synodal Church:

A « different Church », a listening Church, a learning Church open to newness

- Francis, Address *For the Opening of the Synod, October 9, 2021*
- 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.
- (...) Dear brothers and sisters, may this Synod be a true season of the Spirit! For we need the Spirit, the ever new breath of God, who sets us free from every form of self-absorption, revives what is moribund, loosens shackles and spreads joy. 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.**



The need to combine a long-term & short-term horizon

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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.

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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 are experiencing.



The Continental Stage

Presentation of the Continental Stage

<https://www.synod.va/en/synodal-process/the-continental-stage/faq.html>



Presentation of the Working Document for the Continental Stage

<https://www.synod.va/en/highlights/working-document-for-the-continental-stage.html>

Methodology for the Continental Stage

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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.

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 (2020) | Cardinal Grech (2022): Press Conference: the second stage of the synodal process.

A Church on the move, People of God on the way

- A dynamic vision of the Church
- A dynamic vision of the christian identity



Synodality is a learning process

- Synodality starts with our 'situatedness' and the starting-point are different
- Synodality is a gradual process, step by step
- Synodality is a learning by doing
- This synod brings a personal integration of this call for Synodality
- This synod is a process of empowerment of the baptized
- This synod is a path of recognition through listening
- Synodality is a creative and open path
- Synodality is a spiritual experience with the Holy spirit at the center
 - The importance of the synodal methodology
 - This synod is a way to advance the reception of the Second Vatican council

The experience of the continental stage

- **Joy and desire to continue the synodal process**
- The novelty and the fruits of gathering together bishops, priests, lay men and women, religious, young people...
- **The synodal path as an exchange of gifts**
- The emphasis on the local church and a new type of relationships between « Rome » and the local churches in the spirit of Predicate Evangelium

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
 - A communication to value diversity and a polyedric form of unity rather than uniformity and oppositions
 - **The ability to embrace vulnerability and incompleteness**
 - The eschatological dimension
 - A communication highlighting humility, small steps and patience rather than revolution
- This synod is highlighting the reality of a mutipolar Church



Overview of Continental Assemblies

Empowering the voices of the continents



Schedule of Continental Assemblies

Status as of 11/03/2022

Continent / Region	Date
CCEE - Europe	Czechia, 5th - 12th February 2023
CELAM – Latin America	Bogotá, 20th - 31st March 2023
CPCO – Middle East	Beirut, 12th – 18th February 2023
FABC - Asia	Bangkok, 23rd – 27th February 2023
FCBCO - Ocenia	Suva, 5th – 9th February 2023
USCCB/CCCB – North America	Orlando, Florida, 13th – 17th February 2023
SECAM - Africa	Addis Ababa, 01st - 06th March 2023



1. Oceania

Approach for the Continental Stage in Oceania







A focus on care for the ocean

- **Our assembly focused on three themes: Care for the oceans; Becoming a more synodal Church; and Formation for mission.**
- Oceania is a network of islands, large and small, rich in diversity. Our Oceanic identity and location provide the context in which we participate in God's mission. **In our region, the ecological crisis is an existential threat for our people and communities.** It is experienced in sea level rise, the acidification of the oceans, droughts, floods and more frequent and more extreme weather events.
- **We recognize ecological conversion as an urgent mission priority not only for us, but also for the whole Church.** Furthermore, we feel called to make our voices heard at the highest levels of government in our own countries, and also at the global level – in the Church and broader society – for the sake of our ocean home and its peoples.

Concluding Statement from the Catholic Bishops of Oceania



2. Europ



The beauty of diversity, a new way to name and face tensions

- We have experienced four days of listening and dialogue based on the resonances aroused by the Working Document for the Continental Stage within the Churches from which we come. As the European Continental Assembly, we realise that we have had a profoundly spiritual experience through the synodal method.
- **Our work has been rich and exciting, though not without its problems and difficulties.** It has allowed us to look into the eyes of the Church in Europe, with all the treasures of the two great Latin and Eastern traditions that make it up. With an awareness that has grown over the course of the Assembly, **we feel today that we can affirm that our Church is beautiful, showing a variety that is also our wealth.**
- **The synodal style also allows us to address tensions from a missionary perspective, without being paralysed by fear, but drawing from them the energy to continue along the way.** Two in particular have emerged in our work. The first encourages unity in diversity, escaping the temptation of uniformity. The second links the readiness to welcome as a witness to the Father's unconditional love for his children with the courage to proclaim the truth of the Gospel in its entirety: it is God who promises "Love and truth will meet" (Ps 85:11).



3. Middle East

Approach for the Continental Stage in the Middle East







The call to be together

- Synodality is a core of the heritage of our Eastern Churches.
- **Unity in diversity through unity in communion and the mission and testimony of churches.**
- The roots of common churches are the basis of a unified message
- The presence of seculars and their talents in the service of the Body of Christ. **The role of youth, their capabilities, and their expectations for a renewed Church reflect the challenges they face.**
- The importance of the role and mission of women in the church and their participation in decision-making and service.
- The liturgy is our life, and the call for a liturgical renewal that is compatible with the aspirations of our youth while preserving its essence and symbols.
- **Calling for a creative and renewed ecumenism and stimulating ecumenical dialogue.**





4. North America

North American Continental Stage Structure

N. American
Continental Stage

10 Virtual
Assemblies

5 English

3 Spanish

2 French

Timeline

Preparation

- 3-5 Delegates per Diocese (Est. 800-1200 people)
- Register by Monday, November 28, 2022
- DCS reflection and discernment on local level
- Continental Assemblies Resource December 2022

Participation

- 10 Virtual Assemblies December – January
- 5 English
- 3 Spanish
- 2 French

Discernment

- Drafting of North American Continental Synthesis – February 2023
- Due March 31, 2023

The tension between truth and mercy

- between wanting to be inclusive ... (while) being authentic and respectful of the teachings of the church



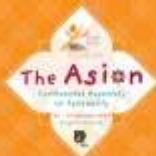


5. Asia

Approach for the Continental Stage in Asia







The Asian Continental Assembly on Synodality

23 - 27 February 2023 at Bangkok, Thailand



#synodbangkok2023

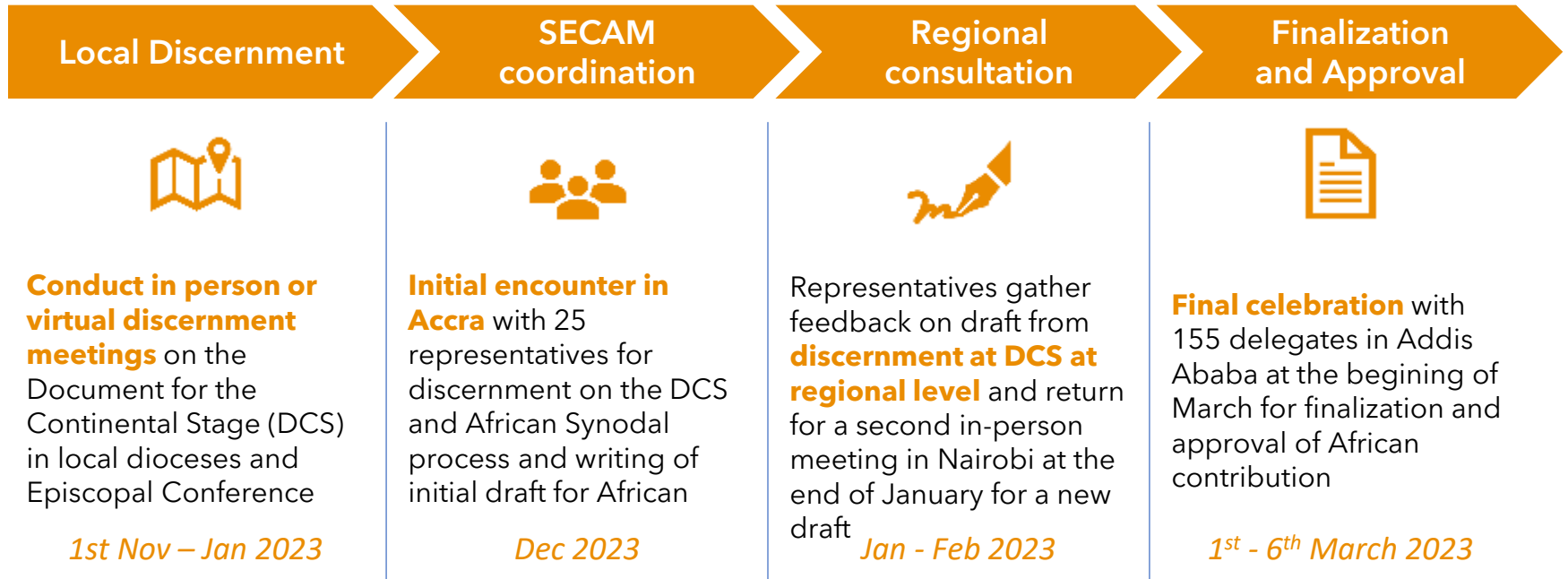
The seek of harmony, A focus on family and formation

- **The diversity of religions in Asia makes it almost compelling to engage in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue as a way of building peace and harmony.** Many reports speak of fruitful engagement with other Christians and persons of other religions.
- **Formation: For a synodal church, there needs to be an initial and ongoing formation formed at all levels, for all people.** The most fundamental is the **communication within families.** Seminarians, priests, and bishops, consecrated men and women must be formed to live synodal leadership styles, communal discernment, and decision-making – the promotion of a culture of synodality. The laity needs to be formed to take active roles, according to their baptismal call, to serve with generosity to God and a love for the church and its people. Formation for a synodal spirituality must be at the heart of the church's mission and vision.



6. Africa

Approach for the Continental Stage in Africa





Church Family of God

A focus on youth

11. During our Continental Synodal Assembly, we have heard the voice of the young people. The Church in Africa is vibrant because of the energy, passion and creativity of the youth. Their contribution to the mission and ministry of the Church is a gift for the edification of a truly synodal church in Africa. Young people have an important place and a pivotal role in the Synodal Family of God in Africa.

12. During our Continental Synodal Assembly, we journeyed with the women who were active participants in the process of listening, dialogue and discernment. We have learned from them how to be a Synodal Church. African women hold the Church together; they are the majority. African women are the backbone of the Church. To journey together as a Synodal Church means recognising their giftedness, talents, charisms and contributions. For women in Africa and across the world, synodality is an opportunity for “full and equal participation” in the life of the Church. Women are a gift to the Church. There is no way true synodality can happen in the Church if women are not considered as equal partners.



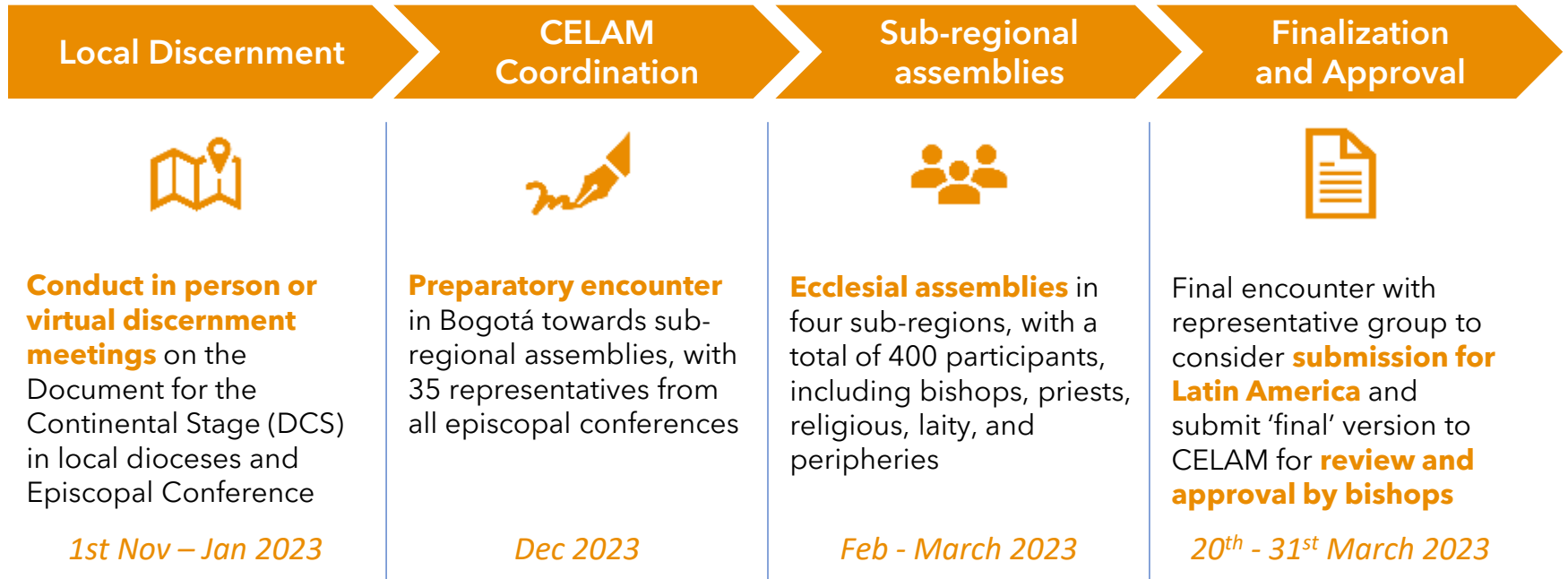
A commitment for synodality

- **A Synodal Church of Conversion and Reform**
- **To overcome and root out the weeds of clericalism, authoritarianism and indifference, we desire to engender new forms of leadership** – be they priestly, episcopal, religious and lay. We desire to form the Synodal Family of God in the practice of integral and life-giving leadership that is relational and collaborative, and capable of generating solidarity and co-responsibility. To achieve this, the Synodal Family of God in Africa pledges to create spaces and enlarge our tent for the possible exercise of various forms of lay ministry.
- **The Synodal Family of God desires to grow in a spirituality that will sustain the practice of synodality**, a spirituality that enables the Synodal Church to grow in interiority and conscience and in encountering and listening to the Holy Spirit. **We desire to encourage and establish synodal practices at all levels of the Church in Africa. We desire to birth a culture of synodality as a habitual way of proceeding in the Church.**
- As the Synodal Family of God in Africa, we are a learning church. We do not walk alone: we have things that we can learn from others. **Enlivened by the spirit of interculturality, ecumenism and interfaith encounter, we walk together with others**, appreciating cultural differences, understanding those particularities as elements which help us to grow. We listen to the spirituality and wisdom of indigenous peoples and local cultures.



7. Latin America

Approach for the Continental Stage in Latin America



REGION	SEDE	FECHA	PARTICIPANTES	RESPONSABLE
CAMEX	EL SALVADOR	13 AL 17 DE FEBRERO	80	Mons. Sócrates René Sándigo
CARIBE	REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA	20 AL 24 DE FEBRERO	31	Mons. Santiago Rodríguez Rodríguez.
BOLIVARIANOS	QUITO	27 DE FEBRERO AL 3 DE MARZO	99	Presidencia C.C. Ecuador
CONO SUR	BRASILIA	6 AL 10 DE MARZO	190	Mons. Joel Portella



Envisioning Vocations, Charisms and Ministries in a Synodal Key

- **Synodality is the art of valuing, welcoming and knowing how to articulate all the gifts and charisms that the Lord has given us**, so that they flow and become a channel of grace and blessing, and, therefore, it is important to value the different vocations" (Bolivariana). The Church is a prophetic, priestly and royal-service People where all its members are subjects of the theological life towards holiness. They receive from God diverse charisms to serve the common good (Cf. AE 171).
- **The richness of the diversity of charisms and ministries has been repeatedly mentioned in the regional meetings.** They are expressed both in the gifts that enrich the consecrated life and in the very varied gifts of the different laity. Therefore, it is necessary "to review the structure of the Church so that it may be a community of communities, recognizing the unity in mission with the diversity of ministries that the Holy Spirit gives through gifts to each of its members, according to their vocation, so as not to oppose the charismatic dimension with the institutional dimension" (Bolivariana).
- **A profound community discernment is needed on what ministries should be created or promoted in light of the signs of the times, especially among the laity**
- In a special way, it is requested that the October General Assembly address this issue, promoting the revision of the theology and forms of a ministerial Church, the formation and profile of ministers, instituted and ordained, and the opening of some ministries to women.



The issue of communication/digital culture in the continental final documents

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Communication, digital culture and young people
A key place/issue for synodality
Towards an hybrid digital church

Young people : an important issue

- The distancing of the youth from the Church
- Their lack of participation in the synodal process
- The digital culture

- ***A call for a better communication and new languages***
- ***The current use of the Internet (and related technologies) and the Church's presence in this 'environment' is such that we are increasingly witnessing a hybridisation (between 'real' and digital) of ecclesial life itself.***
 - ***The presence of the Church "onlife" overcoming the dichotomy between in-person and online to articulate both with an hybrid approach.***

Latin America

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Many young people show great sensitivity to social and environmental problems and great creativity in generating solutions from their spaces. Being "digital natives," they have much more knowledge and skills to help the church discover the digital potential for evangelization, networking and creating a synod culture in these spaces. (n.71)

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The participation of digital synod representatives in the assemblies generated an interest in a more active and proactive presence in this space. The need to accompany digital evangelizers more closely also emerged. (n. 72)

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Acquire digital and radio skills to stay in touch with the needs of parishioners (n. 77)

Asia

“the Church in Asia could imagine itself as a “digital tent,” to be where young people are and to minister effectively to them. Synodality with young people also means living out the tensions they endure in today's rapidly changing world. (n.101)

“Problems faced by young people, such as drug, gambling and online addictions, family breakdown and mental health problems, have not been sufficiently addressed. (n.139)

“In this post-pandemic era, the hybridization of church life (on-site and online) is a reality that we must embrace and maximize opportunities for evangelism, including the wider and more insightful use of technology in this effort, as our Christian mandate. (174)

”the Church of the poor is a Church that cares for our common home, the Church of young people is navigating and evangelizing the digital continent, and the Church in dialogue is called to build bridges between cultures, religions and peoples. (n. 14))

”remains the challenge of engaging with young people in the dialogue between the virtual and real worlds. (n.100)

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Middle East

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The churches' conclusions and the Assembly's discussions warned about the impact of social media abuse on the faithful, especially young people.(n.46)

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Given the importance of this area[Digital World], serving the Good News and "new evangelization" depends on churches' good use of digital communication and culture.

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affermare che gli esperti cristiani di media, clero e laici, devono assumersi la responsabilità di testimoniare i principi e i valori cristiani.

Oceania

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Another problematic issue that has been raised is that of inaccessibility for many countries in Oceania. This is related, first of all, to the geographical isolation of many church communities due to mountainous terrain, distance between islands, or lack of roads. In addition, many areas lack the technological infrastructure that would facilitate access to the Internet and online communication. (n.125)

Digital Synod

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Digital perception of the Church:

The presence of the Church in the digital environment allows us to grow in transparency and confrontation, promoting a close and open attitude to questioning, listening, and dialogue.

Digital communication: The positive image of the Synod in digital natives is recognized as impactful. An important form of credibility is to communicate with transparency.

Some other key themes

Towards the Assembly in October

The missionary challenges in this world

- Ecological crisis
 - Violence, conflicts, war and peace
 - Economic colonisation and decolonisation
 - The growing reality of migrations
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- Importance of the service of charity and promotion of justice+ care of the common home in a synodal approach
 - The call for inculturation and Interculturality
 - Relationships between the Latin Church and Oriental Churches

Co-responsibility, ministry, leadership and authority

- Primacy, collegiality and synodality
- Transparency - Accountability – Co-Responsibility
- The role of bishops and priests

- The centrality of baptism and an all-ministerial-church
- Liturgy and Eucharist

- **Diversity of views**
 - On abuses
 - Society and politics
 - LGBTQ

The drafting of the Instrumentum Laboris

- A process of discernment
- A collaborative work
- A new type of Instrument Laboris
- Publication and translations

Towards the assembly in October

- *May 29 : Press conference on the document "Towards Full Presence. A Pastoral Reflection on Engagement with Social Media"*
- May 31: With Mary towards the synod : prayer in Marin Shrines
- June 7 : Press conference on the Instrumentum Laboris
- Preparation for the members of the synod
- 30 september : Ecumenical Vigil of Prayer
- Oct. 1-3 Retreat for the Members of the Synod
- Oct 4-29 General assembly of the Synod

Towards the assembly in October

- To translate and promote the IL in your country
- To highlight the local fruits of the synod : the challenge to tell stories of synodality.
 - Sharing experience and fruits of the conversation in the spirits
 - Finding witnesses of synodality
- To encourage to continue to implement synodality at the local level
- To work with your diocesan and national synodal team
- To prepare your communication for the synod
 - Media-training for the synod members
 - Possible press conference before and after the synod
- Our communication team with Thierry Bonaventura is at your service



Ecumenical vigil of prayer

Saint Peter's Square, September 30 2023





**A synodal preparation with delegates from all Christian communion
+ Dicastery for Christian Unity+Dicastery for Laity, Families and Life
+ the Taizé community+Vicariat of Rome**

