

DOCTRINE CORNER

The Synod on Synodality (October 2021 to October 2023)

Let us pray:

Prayer Adsumus, Sancte Spiritus
(Prayer of invocation to the Holy Spirit for an Ecclesial Assembly of Governance or Discernment (thus synodal))

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in your name. With you alone to guide us; Make yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go, and how we are to pursue it. We are weak and sinful: Do not let us promote disorder. Do not let ignorance leads us down the wrong path, nor partiality influence our actions. Let us find in you our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life. And not stray from the way of truth and what is right. All this we ask of you, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen

Introduction: On the 9th to the 10th of October 2021 in Rome Pope Francis opened the above Synod on Synodality on the theme; "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission." We were expected to have launched this Synod in our Diocese on the 17th of October 2021. However, we still expect this launch sometimes this month of January 2022. This is why we have decided to start telling you about this Synod on Synodality so that you understand what the Church wants of us at this time. This Synod will be for two years (that is until October 2023) unlike other synods that normally took only one month. We shall understand the reason for this as we explain the special nature of this Synod. Let us start by understanding what is a Synod?

What is exactly a Synod? Synod comes from the Greek word 'Syn-hodos', meaning the 'same way or path.' A Synod is a gathering, traditionally of bishops, that helps the Church to walk forward together in the same direction. Normally bishops would gather around the pope in Rome share ideas about a particular point affecting the Church and then vote on the final document. After, the pope will use the document to write what he wants the Christians to follow in what is called an "apostolic Exhortation," so that it can radiate across the entire church.

What is special about the Synod on Synodality? As we said above, unlike other Synods, this Synod on Synodality is not about addressing a particular issue but about the Church becoming what God intended it to be. Thus this Synod is no longer a one-month meeting of Bishops, but a two-year process for the entire people of God. It is a synod meant to help the Church to understand what it means to be synodal, by gathering the fruits the Holy Spirit is giving us here and now. The aim of the Synod is not to talk about Synodality but to put Synodality into practice. Let us now examine what Synodality is all about.

What is Synodality? Let us try to understand this word as we have been using it up till now. Synodality is about 'journeying together'. This happens through listening to one another in order to hear what God is saying to all of us. It is a realization that the Holy Spirit can speak through anyone to help us walk forward together on our journey as the People of God. Concretely, being "synodal" is a way of being and a way of working that takes a more grassroots, collaborative approach, taking time to discern the path forward together. It highlights the fact that we all have something precious to contribute to the Body of Christ. In this way, a "Synodal Church" is a Church that listens: "It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The lay faithful, the bishops, the pope: 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 is saying to the Church" (Pope Francis, Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, October 17, 2015). This will naturally call us to change our ways of doing things, in order to become more and more who we truly are as a Church: walking together, amidst the entire human family humanity, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Why a Synod on Synodality? It's simply an invitation for the whole Church to have our voices heard. No Christian is an Island. Through this Synod, the Church is saying; the voice of everyone matters because God can talk through anyone ... not only bishops, priests, deacons, brothers, or sisters but All of us! This begins by paying attention to those who are often forgotten, excluded, or not listened to – hearing what God has to say to us through those we may ignore. The path to a Church that listens and walks together starts with you and me. Let's walk forward together, and then we would be putting Synodality into practice

Final Prayer: Holy Spirit of God, lead the Church on our pilgrim path as we listen to you speaking through one another. Enkindle Your love in our hearts to walk forward together as a Church that accompanies all of humanity on our common journey to You. Amen.

PASTORAL SERVICES FOR THE COMMUNITY



"Through this Synod, the Church is saying the voice of everyone matters, because God can talk to anyone... all of us!"