



ONE IN THE MISSION OF CHRIST:
CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

National Assembly 2022

Co-Responsibility in a Synodal Church

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Co-Responsibility:

A key element for synodality,
a strong call from the People of God



Understanding Co-Responsibility through the Lens of Synodality



Understanding Co-Responsibility through the Lens of Synodality

1. The key elements at the basis of the ecclesiology of synodality

- The Church as the People of God on the Way
- The theology of Baptism
- The authority of the *Sensus Fidei Fidelium*
- The action of the Holy Spirit
- The diversity of charisms
- A relational anthropology for a relational Church

2. Synodality, participation, and co-responsibility as a kairos

- A culture of “co”
- The longing of the People of God
- The call of the Holy Spirit for the Church of the third Millennium

3. The practice of co-responsibility in the spirit of the synodality

- A learning process
- A spiritual process
- A new style of leadership
- The importance of teamwork
- Some key issues
- The challenge of formation

Introduction



Synodality, a dynamic vision of the Church in history

Synodality is the realization of the Church in history as communion-in-mission

“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)

➤ **Synodality is the form which the Spirit gives to the People of God in the world (LG §3).** Cf. International Theological Commission (ITC), *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church* (March 2, 2018), §72.

Synodality, a dynamic vision of the Church in history

- **ITC §49: “Synodality manifests the ‘pilgrim’ character of the Church.** The image of the People of God, gathered from among the nations (*Acts 2,1-9; 15,14*), expresses its social, historical and missionary character, which corresponds to **the condition and vocation of each human person as *homo viator***. The path is the image that clarifies our understanding of the mystery of Christ as the Way that leads to the Father. **Jesus is the way from God to man and from man to God.** The grace-filled event whereby He made Himself a pilgrim by pitching His tent among us (*John 1,14*), goes on in the synodal path of the Church.”

ITC = International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church* (March 2, 2018)
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html

➤ Synodality has to shape the whole life and mission of the Church, in all her dimensions



With Pope Francis, “synodality now means not some of the bishops some of the time but all of the Church all of the time.”

Ormond Rush,
“Inverting the
Pyramid: The
Sensus Fidelium
in a Synodal
Church,” *TS*
(March 2017)



"Synodality expresses the nature of the Church, its form, its style, its mission."

"We are Church all together."

"All are protagonists, no one can be considered a mere *extra*." Pope Francis, *Address to the Diocese of Rome* (Sept. 18, 2022)

ITC §120. [Pope Francis](#) teaches that "to walk together is *the constitutive way* of the Church; *the figure* that enables us to interpret reality with the eyes and heart of God; *the condition* for following the Lord Jesus and being servants of life in this wounded time. The breath and pace of the Synod show what we are, and the dynamism of communion that animates our decisions; only in this way can we truly renew our pastoral ministry and adapt it to the mission of the Church in today's world; only in this way can we address the complexity of this time, thankful for the journey accomplished thus far, and determined to continue it with *parrhesia*"[\[168\]](#).



Lambert WILSON

Michael LONSDALE

OF GODS AND MEN



“We didn’t elect you to
decide on your own”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPvglo_VB9g&ab_channel=Movieclips

Synodality, a way of deciding

An example from the Diocese of Créteil in France

- **A new directive to implement synodality:** “The principle of synodality means that in the Church the People of God expresses its needs and wishes (cf. canon 212 §2). **Consequently, a leader never decides alone without having consulted the persons and instances with which he is associated.** He makes important decisions after careful consideration with his collaborators and does not oppose their opinion without serious reason, especially if that opinion is unanimous. **This principle applies to all the pastoral and missionary authorities of the Diocese of Créteil.**”

The aim of the Synod 2021-2023

To (re)learn synodality

Re-read and Practice

→ The Synodal conversion of the Church

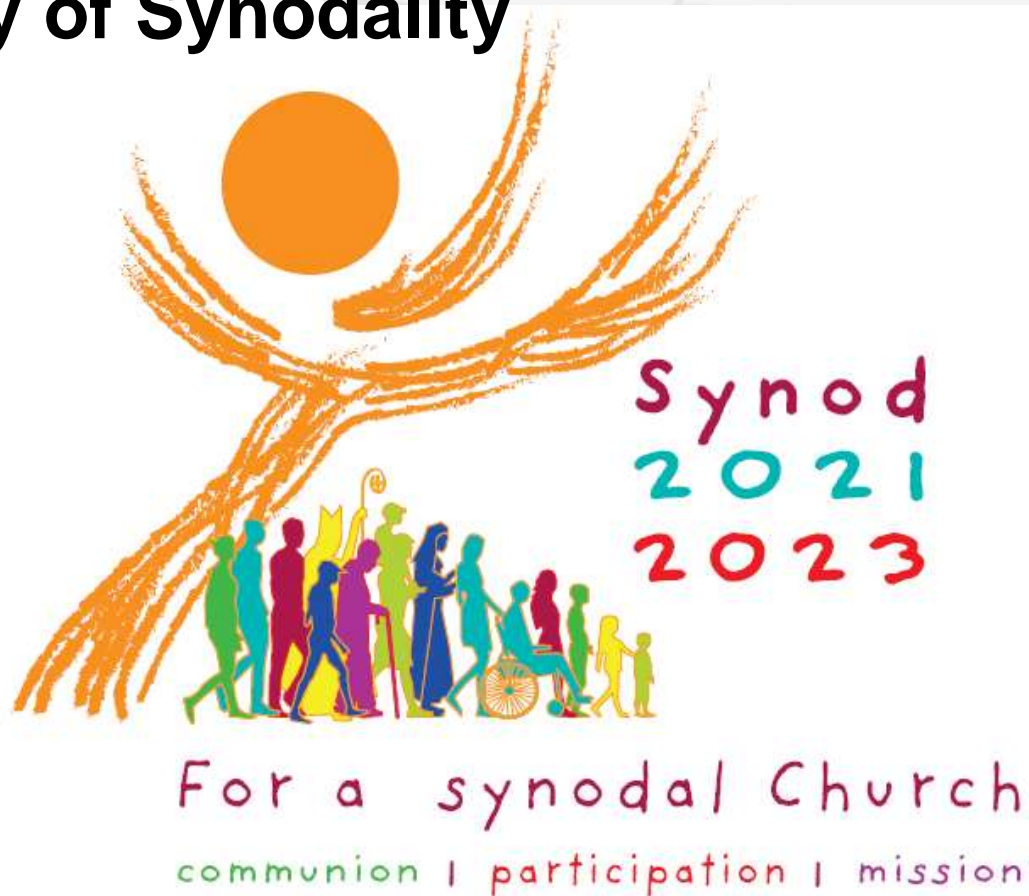
- *Putting into practice the Synodal nature of the entire Church*
- *Towards a “synodalization” of the whole Church at all levels*

**Walking together as a people of missionary pilgrims
to learn and practice synodality**

to re-read and practice exercises of synodality

➤ **Learning by doing**
➤ **An on-going process**

1. The key Elements at the Basis of the Ecclesiology of Synodality



1.1. The Church as the People of God on the Way

- **Together on a pilgrim journey: A Church of missionary pilgrims**

“Through synodality, the Church reveals and configures herself as the pilgrim People of God and as the assembly convoked by the risen Lord.” ITC §42

- **Being the Church as the People of God supposes that all the faithful are co-responsible** in a differentiated manner according to their gifts, ministries, and charisms.

“9. The current pontificate inaugurates a new reception of the Second Vatican Council by giving centrality to Chapter II of *Lumen Gentium*. **Francis recalls that "to be Church is to be People of God" (EG 114)**. It is an opportunity for what it means to be Church to be deepened. **The notion of the People of God led to the understanding of the Church as a totality (EG 17) that lives in a "multiform harmony" (EG 220)**. All its members, or *christifideles*, women and men, are empowered by the Spirit to be subjects of rights and action. **One of the great fruits of this way of being Church is that it emphasizes the participation and co-responsibility of all equally**, and strengthens the bond between the *communio fidelium, episcoporum et ecclesiarum*.” Commission on Theology of the Synod 2021-2023, “A Constitutively Synodal Church”: *Form and Challenges of Walking Together, Basic Ecclesiological Framework for the Synodal Process*

(July 8, 2022)



1.1. The Church as the People of God on the Way

- “This is important: the way to understand and interpret is **through a pilgrim hermeneutic, one that is always journeying**. The journey that began after the Council? No. The journey that began with the first Apostles and has continued ever since. Once the Church stops, she is no longer Church, but a lovely pious association, for she keeps the Holy Spirit in a cage. **A pilgrim hermeneutic capable of persevering in the journey begun in the Acts of the Apostles.** Otherwise, the Holy Spirit would be demeaned.”

Pope Francis, *Address to the Diocese of Rome* (Sept. 18, 2022)

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2021/september/documents/20210918-fedeli-diocesiroma.html>

1.1. The Church as the People of God on the Way

- Synodality: “This stimulates the generation and implementation of **processes that build us as the People of God** rather than the search for immediate results with quick consequences.”

Pope Francis, *Letter to the Pilgrim People of God in Germany* (June 29, 2019)

1.2. The Theology of Baptism

- **“The members of the People of God are united by Baptism**, and “if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, pastors and dispensers of mysteries on behalf of others, **yet all share a true equality** with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the Faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ” (LG, no. 32). 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” **are active subjects of evangelization, both individually and as the entire People of God.**” General Secretariat of the Synod, Preparatory Document *“For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission”* (Sept. 7, 2021), §12
- “Everything that has been said about the People of God is **addressed equally to laity, religious and clergy.**” LG §30
- “Each member is **at the service of the other members** ... [so that] the Pastors and the other faithful are linked to each other **by mutual need.**” LG §32
- “In the People of God, functions, tasks, ministries, states of life and charisms are organically united in a **multiform network of structural ties and vital relationships.**” LG §13

The Theology of Baptism as a basis for Co-Responsibility

- **“If, through the grace of baptism and confirmation, all are empowered to participate in Christ, the Church knows no hierarchy here, for all receive the same fullness of grace and are called to the same vocation of love of God and neighbour.”** ITC §111; 119
- **“The shared and manifest conviction is that the foundation of synodality is baptism, not ordination.** All the baptised are called to walk the synodal path together, each offering his or her specific contribution.” *Synthesis of the UISG-USG from the Diocesan Phase of the Synodal Process (2022)*
- **A focus on what we have in common as baptized before any differences:** according to Lumen Gentium, there is a radical equality between all the baptised (LG §10-13; 40-41), we are all co-responsible, we are all invested with the same dignity within the priestly, royal, and prophetic people. This co-responsibility becomes viable in the synodal journey
 - **Retrieving the common priesthood of all the baptized**
 - **Relocating religious life within structural links with lay faithful and pastors: we are interconnected and interdependent**

1.3. The Authority of the *Sensus Fidei Fidelium*

- The authority of the *sensus fidei* of the entire People of God, which is “infallible ‘in credendo.’” Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (Nov. 24, 2013), §119
- The sense of faith in all the faithful (i.e. the *sensus fidelium*) is as vital a part of the teaching authority of the Church (i.e. the magisterium) as that of the hierarchy.
- **Synodality as a way to retrieve the authority of the *Sensus Fidei*.**

“**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)

The Theology and Practice of the *Sensus Fidei Fidelium* (LG §12)

“10. One of the central elements of this ecclesiology is found in the theology and practice of the *sensus fidei fidelium* (LG §12). The Holy Spirit empowers each *christifideles* to contribute what is proper to the edification of the whole body. The voice of the faithful taken in isolation or that of the bishop alone is not sufficient to manifest the will of God (1 Thess 2:13; LG §35). It is necessary to enter into the dynamics of the *consensus omnium fidelium*. Therefore, a greater theological, pastoral and canonical deepening of *Lumen Gentium* 12 is necessary. Especially, the relationship between the exercise of authority and the *sensus fidei fidelium*, or of the *sensus fidei* and the *consensus omnium fidelium*. But also, between the infallibility of the whole People of God and that of the magisterium; and even the ways of participation and involvement of all the faithful in the processes of consultation, listening, discernment, elaboration and decision taking, in order to achieve the “marvelous harmony of Pastors and Faithful in preserving, practicing and professing the faith received (DV §10)” (PD §13).”

Commission on Theology of the Synod 2021-2023, “A Constitutively Synodal Church”
Form and Challenges of Walking Together: Basic Ecclesiological Framework for the Synodal Process
(July 8, 2022)

1.4. The Action of the Holy Spirit



**“In the first place,
the synodal approach
gives priority
to the Holy Spirit.”**

Jos Moons, SJ,
“A Comprehensive Introduction to Synodality:
Reconfiguring Ecclesiology and Ecclesial
Practice,” *Annals of Theology, The Learned
Society of Catholic University of Lublin* 69, 2022.

1.4. The Action of the Holy Spirit

- **The agency of the Holy Spirit, a practical pneumatology**
- “The principle of synodality is the action of the Spirit in the communion of the Body of Christ and in the missionary journey of the People of God.” ITC §47
- “The Spirit of the Lord indwells each believer and the community, from which it follows that all have the right and duty to participate with their own charisms in the life and mission of the Church.” Rossano Sala, SDB, “Un excellent point de départ. Invitation à la lecture d’un récent document sur la synodalité,” *Revue Lumen Vitae*, 2021/4 (Volume LXXVI), pp. 371-378. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-lumen-vitae-2021-4-page-371.htm>

1.5. The Diversity of Charisms

- **The principle of the participation of everyone in the life of the Church**
- **“Synodality means that the whole Church is a subject and that everyone in the Church is a subject. The faithful are $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\omicron\delta\omicron\iota$, companions on the journey. They are called to play an active role inasmuch as they share in the one priesthood of Christ^[62], and are meant to receive the various charisms given by the Holy Spirit in view of the common good^[63]. Synodal life reveals a Church consisting of free and different subjects, united in communion, which is dynamically shown to be a single communitarian subject built on Christ, the corner-stone, and on the Apostles, who are like pillars, built like so many living stones into “a spiritual house” (cf. 1 Peter 2,5), “a dwelling-place of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2,22).” ITC §57**
- **“Youth ministry has to be synodal; it should involve a “journeying together” that values “the charisms that the Spirit bestows in accordance with the vocation and role of each of the Church’s members, through a process of co-responsibility... Motivated by this spirit, we can move towards a participatory and co-responsible Church, one capable of appreciating its own rich variety, gratefully accepting the contributions of the lay faithful, including young people and women, consecrated persons, as well as groups, associations and movements. No one should be excluded or exclude themselves”.^[111] Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (March 25, 2019), §206**

1.6. A relational anthropology for a relational Church

- **The form of the “with,” of the “ecclesial we” in order to be coherent with the mission of the Church**
- **Pastoral ministry today requires that relationships be placed at the center, because faith is only transmitted through and in encounters.** The Final Document of the Synod on Youth (FDSY), in Chapter II of Part III, entitled “Journeying together in daily life,” translates this into the subtitle “**From structures to relationships**”: “So it is not enough to have structures, if authentic relationships are not developed within them; it is actually the quality of these relationships that evangelizes.” *FDSY* §128
- A relational Church: Fraternity and friendship in the Lord, a Church of brothers and sisters in Christ
- **Reciprocity and mutual complementarity among all ecclesial subjects** (*LG* §32).
“It is a matter of adopting “a relational way of viewing the world, which then becomes a form of shared knowledge, vision through the eyes of another and a shared vision of all that exists”[\[145\]](#). For [Blessed Paul VI](#) true dialogue is spiritual communication[\[146\]](#), which requires specific attitudes: love, respect, trust and prudence[\[147\]](#); “Dialogue thrives on friendship, and most especially on service”[\[148\]](#). Because truth – as [Benedict XVI](#) emphasized – “is *lógos* which creates *diá-logos* and hence communication and communion”[\[149\]](#).” *ITC* §111

Relationships at the center

“It is in relationships – with Christ, with others, in the community – that faith is handed on. For the sake of mission, too, the Church is called to adopt a relational manner that places emphasis on listening, welcoming, dialogue and common discernment in a process that transforms the lives of those taking part. “A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening ‘is more than simply hearing’. It is a mutual listening 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)” (Francis, [Address for the Commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops](#), 17 October 2015). In this way the Church presents herself as the “tent of meeting” in which the Ark of the Covenant is preserved (cf. Ex 25): a dynamic Church, in movement, which accompanies while journeying, strengthened by many charisms and ministries. Thus does God make himself present in this world.” FDSY §122



Rediscovering the primacy of the ecclesial “we” to serve the common good

- “**Life is a community journey** in which tasks and responsibilities are distributed and shared according to the common good.” Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia* (Feb. 2, 2020), §20
- Synodality awakens and strengthens the **ecclesial “we”**: it is passing from “I” to “Us”
- Synodality aims at and produces **communion** at the service of the “**common home.**”

Two Perspectives for Journeying Together

“Journeying together’ can be understood from two different perspectives, which are strongly interconnected.

“1. The first perspective looks at the internal life of the particular Churches [...]

“2. The second perspective considers how the People of God journeys together with the entire human family. Thus, our gaze will focus on the state of relations, dialogue, and possible common initiatives with believers of other religions, with people who are distant from the faith, as well as with specific social environments and groups, with their institutions (the world of politics, culture, economics, finance, labor, trade unions, and business associations, non-governmental and civil society organizations, popular movements, minorities of various kinds, the poor and the excluded, etc.).” PD §28-29

Fratelli Tutti: Our vocation to be a “we”

- “The human family’s innate vocation to fraternity” (*Fratelli Tutti* §26)
- “To bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development.” (*Laudato Si’* §13)
- **“We need to think of ourselves more and more as a single family dwelling in a common home.”** (*FT* §17; 217). In Spanish, “*necesitamos constituirnos en un ‘nosotros’ que habita la casa común*” (literally: “we need to constitute ourselves into a ‘we’ that inhabits the common home”).
- “Unless we recover **the shared passion to create a community of belonging and solidarity** worthy of our time, our energy and our resources, the global illusion that misled us will collapse and leave many in the grip of anguish and emptiness. [...] The notion of “every man for himself” will rapidly degenerate into a free-for-all that would prove worse than any pandemic.” *FT* §36

“We are part of one another” FT §32

- “True, a worldwide tragedy like 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**. As I said in those days, “the storm has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false and superfluous certainties around which we constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities... Amid this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about appearances, has fallen away, revealing once more the ineluctable and blessed awareness that **we are part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another**”.[\[31\]](#)”

→ Synodality lays out a Vision of Missionary Co-Responsibility

- CO-RESPONSIBLE IN THE MISSION: one of the ten themes to explore for the synodal consultation (cf. PD §30).

V. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION

“Synodality is at the service of the Church’s mission, in which all her members are called to participate. Since we are all missionary disciples, how is each Baptized person called to be a protagonist in the mission? How does the community support its members committed to service in society (social and political commitment, in scientific research and teaching, in the promotion of social justice, in the protection of human rights, and in caring for the common home, etc.)? How do you help them to live out these commitments in a logic of mission? How is discernment about mission-related choices made, and who participates in it? How are the different traditions that constitute the patrimony of many Churches, especially the Oriental ones, integrated and adapted, with respect to the synodal style, in view of an effective Christian witness? How does collaboration work in territories where different *sui iuris* Churches are present?”

<https://www.synod.va/en/news/the-preparatory-document.html>

2. Synodality, Participation, and Co-Responsibility as a *Kairos*



2.1. A Culture of “CO”

- **Understanding youth culture in our post-modern digital society as a culture of participation**

EPIC culture

- Experience
- Participation
- Image
- Connection



“I want to encourage all of you in this effort, because I know that **“your young hearts want to build a better world.** I have been following news reports of the many young people throughout the world who have taken to the streets to express the desire for a more just and fraternal society. Young people taking to the streets! **The young want to be protagonists of change.”** CV §174

2.2. The Longing of the People of God

- The need for participation, the request for sharing, the desire for protagonism, the growing awareness of interdependency
- “We want to say, especially to the hierarchy of the Church, that they should be a transparent, welcoming, honest, inviting, **communicative, accessible, joyful and interactive community.**” *Final Document of the Pre-Synodal Meeting on “Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment”* (March 19-24, 2018), §11

A Strong Call for Co-Responsibility

“26. Priests are most often praised when they enable collaboration and co-responsibility. “Our parish priest is very open, collaborative and empowering. He encourages people to get involved in decision-making and leading locally.” 32 Conversely, the harshest criticisms are reserved for priests who are controlling and insensitive, who shield themselves from their parishioners and fail to listen to them, and act as if they alone are responsible for the mission and life of the Church. The term clericalism is constantly invoked in the reports to describe a resistance on the part of priests and some lay people to the exercise of co-responsibility and the missionary discipleship to which all the baptised are called. The reports highlight the need for a change in the way priests and lay people relate in order to see themselves as both responsible for the mission of the Church. This was one of the strongest constant themes in the submissions [...] Running through the reports is a clear vision of how the future can be different when all the People of God – lay, Religious, clergy, bishops – act together, in their distinct roles and functions, but all as missionary disciples. **A call for greater participation and collaboration is a constant.**” Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, *National Synthesis Document* (June 22, 2022)

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/06/synod-national-synthesis-england-wales.pdf>

The longing of religious for a synodal Church of participation and co-responsability

- “The desire to strengthen the synodal model – to walk together as the people of God and as consecrated persons – appears in all the conversations summarised here. From this synthesis each Institute and community will be able to continue its reflection and its commitment and efforts in favour of synodality.
- “11. We dream of a Church of collaborative and communal discernment: where the most important issues are resolved in consultation with the greatest number of people involved and where those who are different, those who denounce and proclaim are listened to.
- “12. The Church of a new paradigm, not pyramidal but circular and horizontal: participatory, witnessing, compassionate, inclusive, unified, transforming Church; listening Church, Church of the people.”

Synthesis of the UISG-USG from the Diocesan Phase of the Synodal Process (2022)

A strong call to foster collaboration with the laity and to partner with others

- “13. 3. Openness to collaboration
- **“Consecrated life – on all continents – expresses the desire for greater collaboration and partnership with all lay people**, to include them in more roles within their charismatic Institutes and families. The aim is greater mutual appreciation and the possibility of enriching and learning from each other. This is something we still need to investigate and concretize. There are deeper and fuller ways of collaborating that we have not yet imagined, and we must work together to achieve this.
- “Networks are created between people working towards the same purpose or goal: meaningful encounters with others, joint paths of spirituality – prayer/contemplation, interfaith relationships, migration, climate change, seeking the common good. The seeds of synodality arise in the search for the meaning of life by people from all walks of life who come together for this purpose; the pandemic situation has made it easier to search together and help each other; thus, small Christian communities have also been born.”

Synthesis of the UISG-USG from the Diocesan Phase of the Synodal Process (2022)

2.3. The Call of the Holy Spirit



The Holy Spirit
needs us

Pope Francis



“The Holy Spirit is asking us to be more synodal.” (Diocese of Salford)

“Through this process we have discovered that synodality is a way of being Church, in fact, it is the way of being Church.”

(Diocese of Northampton)

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/06/synod-national-synthesis-england-wales.pdf>



“Synodality is the way of being the Church today according to the will of God, in a dynamic of discerning and listening together to the voice of the Holy Spirit.”

Pope Francis

Discernment as the heart of synodality

- **“113. Exercising discernment is at the heart of synodal processes and events. That is the way it has always been in the synodal life of the Church. The ecclesiology of communion and the specific spirituality and praxis that follow on from it involve the mission of the entire People of God, so that it becomes "necessary today more than ever (...) to be formed in the principles and methods of a way of discernment that is not only personal but also communitarian"[\[151\]](#). It is a matter of the Church, **by means of the theological interpretation of the signs of the times under the guidance of the Holy Spirit**, travelling the path that is to be followed in service of God's plan brought to eschatological fulfilment in Christ[\[152\]](#), which also has to be fulfilled in every *kairós* throughout history[\[153\]](#). **Communal discernment allows us to discover God's call in a particular historical situation**[\[154\]](#).”**

ITC, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church* (March 2, 2018)

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html

The participants of the 97th USG (Union of Superiors General) Assembly addressed a Letter to Pope Francis to witness their commitment to synodal conversion.

“We recognise the call to a “synodal conversion” that we all must answer and we look forward with you in hope, praying that this Synod may **be a time of “authentic spiritual discernment” that will enable the Church “to cooperate more effectively with the work of God in history” and give the Church the form and direction it needs now and in the future in order to be faithful to its calling and mission in the world.”**

→ Synodality is a process of empowerment for the whole People of God to achieve co-responsibility

- This mission/work/responsibility is entrusted to the whole people of God, not only the bishops and the faculties of theology; neither can it be claimed solely by the laity. In other words, our principle of the mutual empowerment and reciprocity of synodal relationships and charism is effective here. Each has their unique role to play as the Spirit works through the experience, circumstance, expertise, and charisms that are distributed through the whole Body of Christ.

3. The Practice of Co-Responsibility in the Spirit of Synodality



3.1. A Learning Process

From a top-down/teaching Church to a listening/learning Church

Synodality radically reconceives the distinction between the hierarchy as *ecclesia docens* (the Church that teaches) and the laity as *ecclesia discens* (the Church that learns): ultimately the Church is always primarily learning.



3.2. A Spiritual Process

- Being in touch with interiority to listening humbly and speak boldly
- “What characterizes a synod's journey is the role of the Holy Spirit. (...) Open to changes and new possibilities, **the Synod is for everyone an experience of conversion.**”

Pope Francis, *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*, Simon & Schuster 2020, p. 86

- “The *parrhesía* of the Spirit required the People of God on its synodal journey is the trust, frankness and courage to “enter into the expanse of God’s horizon” in order to “ensure that a sacrament of unity exists in the world and that man is therefore not destined for dispersion and confusion”[\[169\]](#). The lived and enduring experience of synodality is, for the People of God, a source of the joy promised by Jesus, a catalyst of new life, the springboard for a new phase of missionary commitment.” ITC §121

The Spiritual Experience of Synodality

- A path of metanoïa/conversion
- A path of kenosis
- A path of reconciliation



The centrality of the Word of God
Biblical resources for synodality
and other resources

<https://www.synod.va/en/resources/spiritual-and-liturgical-resources.html>



TOWARDS A SPIRITUALITY FOR SYNODALITY

Feedback and deepening on the Document just published

https://www.synodresources.org/resource_post/249643/

www.synod.va

Key attitudes for Synodality

- Faith and trust in God
- Listening
- Humility
- Prayer
- Dialogue and sharing.
- Confidence in others
- Inner freedom

“The *parrhesía* of the Spirit required the People of God on its synodal journey is **the trust, frankness and courage to “enter into the expanse of God’s horizon”** in order to “ensure that a sacrament of unity exists in the world and that man is therefore not destined for dispersion and confusion”[\[169\]](#). The lived and enduring experience of synodality is, for the People of God, a source of the joy promised by Jesus, a catalyst of new life, the springboard for a new phase of missionary commitment.” ITC §121

→ A Spirituality of Synodality

3.3. A new Style of Leadership

UISG Assembly “Embracing vulnerability for synodality”

“I commit myself to live vulnerable synodality through service as a leader, animating it **within the community together with the people of God**”



A new style of leadership: The style of discernment

- **In the synodal Church, the pastor blends in with the community in which he walks and of which he is the servant.** He is this close shepherd, immersed in the midst of his flock who smells the sheep. “Shepherds walk with their people: we shepherds walk with our people, at times in front, at times in the middle, at times behind. A good shepherd should move that way: in front to lead, in the middle to encourage and preserve the smell of the flock, and behind, since the people too have their own ‘sense of smell.’” Pope Francis, *Address to the Diocese of Rome* (Sept. 18, 2021)
- **Breathing together:** The minister who leads and accompanies the synodal process then makes the final decision based on this whole spiritual process of listening and discernment which can be understood through the important notion of *conspiratio*
- A notion that can be translated in the words of the theologian John Henry Newman as a “common breathing of the faithful and the pastors.”

Sharing the gift of discernment: Fostering communal discernment

- “114. Communal discernment implies carefully and courageously listening to “the groans” of the Spirit (*cf. Romans 8,26*) which emerge through the explicit or sometimes silent cry that goes up from the People of God: “to listen to God, so that with Him we may hear the cry of His People; to listen to His People until we are in harmony with the will to which God calls us”[\[155\]](#). A disciple of Christ must be like a preacher, who “has to contemplate the Word, but he also has to contemplate his people”[\[156\]](#). **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 exchange of gifts and in the convergence of all energies in view of building up the Body of Christ and proclaiming the Gospel; 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.**”

ITC, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church* (March 2, 2018)

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_synodalita_en.html

Breathing together

“In the synodal Church, **the pastor mingles with the community in which he walks and of which he is the servant.** He is that close shepherd, immersed in the midst of his flock, who smells the scent of the sheep. And depending on the time and circumstances, he may walk in front of, in the midst of, or behind the flock with which he is united.” Pope Francis



The challenge of fostering a common passion and vision for the mission

- “The Pastors, established by God as “authentic guardians, interpreters and witnesses of the faith of the whole Church,”¹⁶ should not be afraid to listen to the Flock entrusted to them. 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.”
PD §14
- A new culture of ecclesial consensus on the basis of a *consensus omnium fidelium*, because “in a synodal style, decisions are made by discernment, on the basis of a *consensus* born of common obedience to the Spirit.” PD §30

A new style of leadership

- Vision of a servant and collaborative leadership rooted in a conciliar theology of ministry articulated with the vision of synodality
- Re-positioning of the leader as part of the community, bonded to and not separated from the people he/she serves
 - → “co-partners with the Spirit”
 - → accountability, reflection and supervision
- Co-responsibility and participation
- Accompaniment and empowerment
- A new relationship to the power
- An exercise of the authority as an empowerment to liberate the liberty.
- ➔ Cf. *FDSY* §71 on “***The true sense of authority***”:
“A generative force to activate and liberate the freedom.”

Participation and Co-Responsability

- “It is worth noting, finally, that among the characteristics of our “being Church” that the young particularly appreciate are a **readiness and a capacity for working collaboratively**: in this way the formation of the young can be more significant, effective and incisive. **The skill required for working collaboratively involves cultivating specific relational virtues**: the discipline of listening and the capacity to give the other person space, readiness to forgive and willingness to ‘put oneself on the line,’ according to a genuine spirituality of communion.”

FDSY §103

3.4. The Importance of Teamwork

- Learning from the youth a synodal pastoral and the importance of teamwork
 - The Prophecy of Joel: “When young and old alike are open to the Holy Spirit, they make a wonderful combination. The old dream dreams, and the young see visions. How do the two complement one another?” CV §192
 - “Consecrated life [...] matures when the young and elderly walk together, when the young rediscover their roots and the elderly welcome those fruits. When we walk alone, however, when we remain fixated on the past or jump ahead in trying to survive, then the consecrated life stagnates.” Pope Francis, *Homily at Mass for the World Day of Consecrated Life* (Feb. 2, 2019)
- My Personal Experience of Co-Responsability in campus ministry, WYDs, and the Ignatian family in France
 - The value of co-leadership with senior&junior, men and women
 - The value of diversity, intergeneration and interculturality
 - An emphasize on our charismatics families : sisters and brothers, lay people and youth

The importance of teamwork with young adults: Learning from the Synod on Young People

Young people suffering

First victims of the “culture of waste”

- Migration, violence, unemployment, exploitation, abuse, discrimination, marginalization
- Wounded, often marginalized and voiceless...
- Desire to be heard, recognized and accompanied

Protagonists... with resources and resilience

- Demand for social justice, solidarity and peace
- Social engagement and volunteerism
- Great sensitivity to *Laudato Si'*
- Capacity for diversity, intercultural and interreligious dialogue
- Demand for the advancement of women

Discernment of one's vocation-with the need to be accompanied

- Vocation is liberation of freedom
- Vocation is mission and social commitment “I am a mission on this earth”

Working in Co-Responsibility with Youth

- A common call to face together the global challenge of integral ecology, migrations and poverty
- Synergy, networking, teamwork, and partnerships
- Working together in an integral pastoral approach
- The way: *Laudato Si'* as our GPS for method and implementation
 - Faith and Justice, both social and spiritual commitment
 - Integral youth pastoral: strong spiritual quest and justice commitment
 - To involve youth through concrete actions and service projects

3.5. Some Key Issues



The need to value Co-Responsibility between men and women based on equality and reciprocity

- The former synods as a process of listening to the cries of the victims, the cries of the women → A sound box for women's voice
- A call for a greater recognition and greater valuing of women in society and in the Church. "The Synod recommends that everyone be made more aware of **the urgency of an inevitable change**, not least on the basis of anthropological and theological reflection on **the reciprocity between men and women.**" *FDSY §55*
- "A living Church can react by being attentive to **the legitimate claims of those women who seek greater justice and equality**. A living Church can look back on history and acknowledge a fair share of male authoritarianism, domination, various forms of enslavement, abuse and sexist violence. With this outlook, **she can support the call to respect women's rights, and offer convinced support for greater reciprocity between males and females**, while not agreeing with everything some feminist groups propose. Along these lines, **the Synod sought to renew the Church's commitment "against all discrimination and violence on sexual grounds"**.^[17] That is the response of a Church that stays young and lets herself be challenged and spurred by the sensitivities of young people." *CV §42*

Women in a synodal Church

- *Final Document Synod on Youth*
- §148. **A Church that seeks to live a synodal style cannot fail to reflect on the condition and role of women within it, and consequently in society more generally.** Young men and women ask this question forcefully. The fruits of such reflection need to be implemented through a courageous change of culture and through change in daily pastoral practice. (...) A sphere of particular importance in this regard is **the female presence in ecclesial bodies at all levels, including positions of responsibility, as well as female participation in ecclesial decision-making processes,** respecting the role of the ordained minister. This is **a duty of justice,** which draws inspiration both from the way Jesus related to men and women of his day, and from the importance of the role of certain female figures in the Bible, in the history of salvation and in the life of the Church.

Women in a synodal Church

- “102. Seeing the concrete suffering of women who are victims of physical, moral and religious violence, including femicide, **the Church commits to defend their rights and recognise them as protagonists and guardians of creation and of our common home.** We recognize the ministry that Jesus reserved for women. It is necessary to promote the formation of women in biblical theology, systematic theology and canon law, valuing their presence in organizations and leadership within the Church environment and beyond. We want to strengthen family ties, especially for migrant women. We assure women’s place in leadership and formation. We ask that the Motu Proprio of St. Paul VI, *Ministeria quaedam* (1972) be revised, so that women who have been properly trained and prepared can receive the ministries of Lector and Acolyte, among others to be developed. In the new contexts of evangelization and pastoral ministry in the Amazon, where the majority of Catholic communities are led by women, **we ask that an instituted ministry of "women community leadership" be created and recognized as part of meeting the changing demands of evangelization and care for communities.**”

Final Document of the Synod on the Amazon (Oct. 6-27, 2019)

Listening to People on the Margins in a Synodal Process and involving them

- **Christ hears the Voices of the Poor** In the Gospel of Mark (10:46-52), Bartimaeus – a beggar standing by the roadside – calls out to Jesus. The crowd wants to silence Bartimaeus, but Jesus knows how to hear his call, to recognize his faith, and to experience an authentic encounter with him. For Bartimaeus, it is an experience of liberation and belonging: he lifted up to walk among the disciples. These encounters occur often throughout the Gospels.
- **People on the Margins bring us Back to the Essentials:** Listening to people on the margins can guide the Church towards the essential: how do our communities truly witness to the fact that Christ saves our lives and renews our relationships?
- **Listening to People on the Margins Ensures that we are Listening to Everyone:** Striving to encounter them, to hear their voices, and to receive their input, is a compass for a synodal process that involves all members of the Church in a genuine way.

Synodality, Interculturality, and Co-Responsability

A way to relate between different local Churches and cultures

- **A synodal Church is a Church of local Churches**
- **The first level of synodality: the particular Church**
- “In order to become this inculturated Church according to the key vision of synodality, a path of reform is necessary which passes through processes of cultural conversion and structural reconfiguration. The final document of the Synod for the Amazon explains it in this way: “Our conversion must also be cultural, to be the other, to learn from the other. To be present, to respect and recognize their values, to live and practice inculturation and interculturality in our proclamation of the Good News” (FD 41).

Rafael Luciani and Nathalie Becquart, “Synodalité et cultures,” *Revue Lumen Vitae*, 2021/4 (Volume LXXVI), <https://www.cairn.info/revue-lumen-vitae-2021-4-page-421.htm>

- **A creative path: Inculturation and interculturality, a path of conversion through a necessary synodal dialogue**
- “The inculturation of the Gospel does not proceed from an analysis conducted in the abstract, by objectification of the structuring elements of a context. On the contrary, it advances only through dialogue with the recipients of the Church's mission. These are, of course, the disciples of Christ who, as listeners to the word of God, are still recipients of the mission: their own evangelization is never finished.”

François Odinet, “Synodalité et inculturation,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 2022/2 (Volume 144), <https://www.cairn.info/revue-nouvelle-revue-theologique-2022-2-page-232.htm>

3.6. The Challenge of Formation: The key issue of Formation for Synodality and Co-Responsability

- “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 the families, and of the communities.*** How do we form people, especially those who hold roles of responsibility within the Christian community, to make them more capable of “journeying together,” listening to one another and engaging in dialogue? What formation do we offer for discernment and the exercise of authority? What tools help us to read the dynamics of the culture in which we are immersed and their impact on our style of Church?” PD §30
 - **The need to train people to pray, to listen, to discern, to dialogue, and to work collaboratively**

The need for structures and processes to implement the way of co-responsibility

Reinvigorating Collegial Bodies

- “In the Church the purpose of any collegial body, whether consultative or deliberative, is always the search for truth or the good of the Church. When it is therefore a question involving the faith itself, the *consensus ecclesiae* is not determined by the tallying of votes, but is the outcome of the working of the Spirit, the soul of the one Church of Christ.” Pope Francis, Apostolic Constitution *Episcopalis Communio* (Sept. 15, 2018), §7

Giving New Life to Synodal Institutions

- *The Synod of Bishops and Diocesan Synods*
- *Pastoral Councils, on the Diocesan and Parish levels, and the Presbyteral Council*
- *A Local, Provincial, or General Chapter for Religious Communities*
- *General Assemblies and Councils of Movements in the Church*

Creating new structures to express and practice Co-Responsibility

Conclusion: Synodality and Co-Responsibility as a creative and open path to be discerned



The Challenge: To live a new Pentecost !

an aggiornamento for a new impetus, “an event of grace”



“If we have to begin anew, it must always be from the least of our brothers and sisters.” Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* §235



“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 be nourished**, 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.”” (PD §32)





Thank you!

Questions for group discussions

- What is your experience and practice of synodality and co-responsibility?
- How this presentation resonates with you? What are your take away to foster a culture and practice of co-responsibility?
- What are your questions?

Basic Question of the Synodal Process

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? (PD, 2)

A question to reflect on, inspired by the fundamental question for the synodal consultation

A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together:” How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church and community? What steps does the Spirit invite you to take in order to grow in the practice of co-responsibility to foster this “journeying together”? (PD §26)



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