

TOWARDS OCTOBER 2024

**The Asian Response to Deepening Aspects of the
Synthesis Report of the Synod, October 2023**

**Guided by the question:
“HOW can we be a synodal Church in mission?”**

PART ONE

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FABC RESPONSE TO THE SYNTHESIS REPORT

“How can we be a synodal Church on mission?”

Introduction

1. The Synthesis Report of the First Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, entitled “A Synodal Church in mission”, was approved by the members of the assembly on 28 October 2023. Keeping in mind that the Synthesis Report is only a document summarizing the results of the conversations that took place during the assembly’s small-group and plenary sessions, the Synthesis Report was presented back to the local churches around the world for further consideration and input that will help with the next phase of the synodal process and the Second Session in October 2024.
2. This “report” seeks to faithfully articulate the experiences of the churches in Asia to the Synthesis Report based on the reports received from the conferences across Asia.
3. Given that Asia is a vast and diverse continent, much will need to be undertaken for the Synthesis Report to be disseminated to the people of Asia. While the first phase of the consultations was more extensive, this phase of reflecting on the Synthesis Report was limited given the challenges of time, and the diversity of languages of Asia made it equally challenging.
4. Nevertheless, despite the challenges, it must be acknowledged that great attempts were made to disseminate the document to as many people as possible and translate the Synthesis Report to as many local languages as possible. Some in its entirety, while others summarized the Synthesis Report for the benefit of the different communities.
5. The churches in Asia acknowledge the positive effects of the Synthesis Report and find many resonances with what has been documented in the experiences of the peoples of Asia. Though we recognize that Asia’s contexts are unique and diverse, there is a general acceptance that the

Synthesis Report captures the essence of the state of the Catholic Church and the issues that confront us today.

6. The Synthesis Report has provided the churches in Asia with another moment for deeper reflection, celebrating the 'convergences', looking deeper into the 'matters for consideration', and finding ways to implement some of the proposals made at the first session as deemed appropriate in the local churches. The Synthesis Report further provided the springboard for many of the conferences to evaluate the life and existing ministries within the Church while at the same time exploring new pathways that would embrace the spirit of walking together.
7. It has been noted that many of the reports across Asia show tremendous enthusiasm for the synod methodology, which uses conversation in the Spirit as the starting point for the synodal journey. Many dioceses and conferences have introduced this method into their existing structures with great success.
8. The positive experiences, as reported, bear testimony that the conversation in the Spirit has brought about not only a greater awareness of the need to be co-responsible for the life of the Church (*modus vivendi*) but has also provided greater opportunities for involvement in the mission of the Church (*modus operandi*).
9. The communal character of the Asian people provides a natural predisposition to implement the synodal way. The communion of communities, which can be experienced in the Basic Ecclesial Communities (and other forms of communal living), provides a natural locus for many of the fruits of synodality to take root and sprout for the growth of the churches in Asia. These cultural factors predispose us to embrace the synodal path and further reflect on the question, "How can we be a synodal Church on mission?"

A. Effects of Synodality

10. Reflecting on the Synthesis Report provided the churches in Asia with an opportunity to recognize the preliminary effects of promoting a more synodal Church, which began

in a formal way in 2021. However, we also recognize that many of the characteristics of a synodal church are already present in the churches of Asia in different and creative ways. Here are some of the effects of embarking on this synodal journey as reported by the churches in Asia.

11. With the multiplication of conversations in the Spirit at various forums, more of Christ's faithful were trained to be attuned to how the Spirit works in individual souls and communities of faith. In many exercises of ecclesial discernment, many participants realized that fidelity to Church teaching, effective and affective communion with each other and their pastors, and dedication to personal and liturgical prayer (cf. *Acts 2:42*) as well as active participation are hallmarks of a synodal Church.
12. Church life is indeed becoming increasingly synodal. This involves respecting the baptismal dignity of members, recognizing and developing the charisms given by the Spirit to build up the Body of Christ, and involving more of the faithful in decision-making—especially those who will be affected by said decisions.
13. This has motivated more of the faithful to participate not only in the liturgical life of the Church but also in the various ministries that promote integral human development, the care of our common home, etc. The participation of the people of God through a synodal way has further accentuated the need to walk together and journey together towards a common goal.
14. Many young people who look forward to a more welcoming and accompanying Church appreciate the trust, hope, attention, time, and effort that their elders – especially their pastors – devote to them in a ministry and Church that is safe for minors and vulnerable adults. The synodal process has allowed them to find their place in the Church as they recognize their voices being heard.
15. This is true even on the digital continent, which has witnessed an explosion of evangelization through prayer, truth, and charity—all led by young people who see themselves as digital missionaries promoting the good

- news. The mission of the Church is no longer only a face-to-face encounter but also in the digital world, where the reach is further and wider, and the possibilities are endless.
16. Healthy creativity in the face of the complex pastoral situation is encouraging more and more pastors and communities to explore new forms of ministry for the mission of the Church while revisiting old ones that may require a new focus and direction in light of the changes that are occurring in the world. Renewed interest in the permanent diaconate for the mission of a synodal church is one such example.
 17. A deeper sense of co-responsibility for evangelization through this synodal process has given rise to a growing confidence in recognizing and dealing with all forms of clericalism in the Church by promoting a culture of walking together that also promotes obedience, transparency, and accountability among the ordained, the consecrated, and the lay.
 18. While the effects of the synodal journey are beginning to bear fruit in the churches in Asia, there is a recognition that there is an ongoing need for formation in synodality through means of speeches, conferences, courses, programs, workshops, recollections, retreats, etc. Formation in synodality is beginning to be provided to the ordained, the consecrated, and the lay.
 19. The family is recognized as the first school of synodality, where the universal call to holiness and the lay's vocation to sanctify the temporal order are imbibed. Small Christian communities and parishes remain privileged contexts for forming the baptized in being co-responsible for the Church and its mission. The purpose is to be more profoundly attentive to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Churches (cf. *Rev* 2:7), and the method is to learn the conversation in the Spirit.

B. Challenges Encountered

20. Becoming a synodal church on mission is an ongoing process rather than a goal to be achieved. It requires a

process of conversion that must affect all, and this takes time. As we have begun the process of conversations in the Spirit, we also recognize that there are challenges along the way. Some of these challenges must be confronted and overcome to become a more synodal Church on mission.

21. **Cultural History:** As we reflect on the rich diversity of languages, cultures, and religious traditions, the Asian ethos can become a challenge in this synodal process. The cultural history of Asia has been the life of the peoples of Asia for centuries; therefore, changes that may seem to challenge or deconstruct what is already ingrained in the way of life may be considered “foreign” to the lives of its people.
22. **Lack of Clarity:** The episcopal conferences in Asia have generally tried to convey the Synthesis Report, coupled with using the synodal process. Despite these efforts, clouds of doubt and confusion continue to exist regarding the term “synodality” due to the linguistic challenges posed by translating into many Asian languages and maybe even because of the inability to move towards a new paradigm for the Church. Some even consider synodality as a move to democratize the Church.
23. **Need for Translations:** The numerous languages in Asia also present a challenge to becoming a synodal Church on mission. Though efforts have been made to translate and summarize the Synthesis Report into these languages, the “limitation of vocabulary” remains a constant challenge. Translations are necessary to convey the Synthesis Report effectively and to as many people as possible, and this takes a significant amount of time and resources.
24. **Lack of Resources:** While reflecting on the Synthesis Report, there is a felt need for ongoing formation and a desire for synodality to be present at all levels of the Church, as well as for the continued conversion of the people of God, especially among the clergy. However, episcopal conferences in Asia are faced with the need for more competent facilitators and resource persons to help in this specific task of formation. In these situations, lay

people are significantly involved but they need more formation. Where there is a scarcity of priests, there is the further difficulty of them going for further studies or ongoing formation.

25. **Need to Traverse Distances:** The vast size of the continent in Asia covers distances and diverse geographical features that pose challenges for meetings and communal discernment process, not to mention the cost of travelling, as well as the time of pastors who are already inundated with parish work and other responsibilities in their dioceses. Despite the ability to connect virtually with each other, there is no substitute for a personal presence for the “conversation in the Spirit”.
26. **Loss of Identity and Relevance:** Synodality has spurred the participation of the laity and their inclusion in the decision-making process, but resistance is felt because of fear among some bishops and priests who feel “threatened” to lose their relevance, authority, income, and privileges: “...there is an unwarranted fear among the clergy to recognize and empower the charisms and ministers of the lay people.”
27. **Cultural Obstacles (Role of Women):** In many predominantly patriarchal societies in Asia, culturally conditioned gender roles make it more difficult for women to take on leadership roles in church organizations and even more challenging when it comes to liturgical roles. While recognizing that the participation of women is more significant and generally accepted in many communities, their leadership roles and decision-making authority still need to be entirely accepted. It has been noted that in some places, cultural diversities coupled with religious traditions also make it difficult for the traditional approach to evangelization. To deepen synodality in the cultural context of Asian countries “requires an approach that is sensitive to the rich diversity of cultures, languages, religions and traditions present within the country”. This “conversion” may take time and, therefore, can neither be forced nor hurried.

28. **Human and Psychological Obstacles:** It must be noted that there are times when the obstacles to synodality are not merely intellectual or cultural but also attitudinal and psychological. These obstacles may be caused by the cultural contexts or even the kind of upbringing. There is a need to address these issues concerning human development at a more foundational level and with leaders who may be anti-social, authoritarian, or predisposed to other characteristics that do not promote the synodal way of the Church.

C. Groups of Concern

29. In reflecting on the Synthesis Report and the way of becoming a synodal Church on mission, it becomes apparent that there are groups of people who will need more attention simply because of past neglect. They are the women, youth, persons with disabilities, the poor, indigenous peoples, and the migrants. The synodal process has already provided space for expressing, studying, and discussing their experiences, which were otherwise “invisible” in the past.
30. Perceptibly, women are more present in the Church for liturgical services and participate actively in its life: “When women are vibrant, the Church is vibrant.” While women play multiple roles in the Church’s life and mission, accepting their leadership roles in liturgical and pastoral ministries is not entirely accepted and frowned upon in some communities. There are places where women are neglected and less appreciated.
31. The same can be said of consecrated women where there is inequality and a lack of opportunities and respect. While recognizing that they are talented and qualified to serve in the different ministries of the Church, some of them are reduced only to the “less significant” ministries in the Church: “There are many talented consecrated women who are qualified to teach and accompany the seminarians as spiritual directors and counsellors, but it is not possible.” For a more synodal church, these “difficult

conversations” must be gradually integrated into the life and ministry of the Church.

32. Many countries in Asia enjoy the vibrant participation of young people in the life of the Church - evangelization, liturgy, social advocacy, digital ministry, and much more. A synodal church must find ways to integrate the young, especially those who are ‘outside the tent’, to help them find a place in the Church. The Church also has to be present where the young people are. The training of youth missionaries, both in the digital and temporal world, must be prioritized - the young people need to be the protagonists of mission and ministry in the life of a synodal church.
33. It is estimated that more than 320 million people in Asia live in extreme poverty (according to the World Bank), and more than 60% of all of the world’s malnourished children live in Asia (FAO). There is already a strong awareness that the churches in Asia cannot negate this reality - an option for the poor. A synodal Church on mission cannot ignore the plight of the poor and marginalized, including the migrants and refugees whose lives have been devastated because of climate catastrophes and political and communal violence. A synodal church must seek to integrate them with dignity and find ways to rebuild their lives.
34. The Church as mother seeks to embrace all of her children, especially the vulnerable and marginalized. She also seeks to form apostles from and for them.

D. Becoming A Synodal Church on Mission

35. While the process of becoming a synodal Church on mission is ongoing, the reports from the Episcopal Conferences state some priorities that need to be addressed immediately rather than in the future. Herein, we state some of the commonalities that appear in the different reports.
36. Many of the reports speak of the need for the Church to enter the digital world more than what is already being

done. The digital world provides endless possibilities to reach out and accompany the people immersed in this culture and not in our churches. The rapid growth of these technologies is shaping the generation to come. Therefore, the Church must be ever present in these “places” where people (especially the young) not only gravitate but whose lives revolve around them. The Church of the present and the future must seek to walk within this realm together with the young. The synodal Church must help, support, and accompany everyone along this new “mission territory.”

37. The process of being synodal calls for inclusivity. In Asia, inclusivity entails inculturation and interreligious dialogue, a theme repeatedly seen in many Asian reports. For decades, inculturation and interreligious dialogue have been priorities for the churches in Asia, given that we live within various cultures and religions. A synodal Church on mission seeks to build bridges with “our neighbors”, work for mutual respect, and live in harmony as brothers and sisters. At the same time, we as a church also learn to respect believers of other religions, cultures, and traditions without antagonism or antipathy. A synodal church must learn in humility to seek ways for authentic collaboration, spiritual sharing, and common prayer for the good of humanity.
38. The Church in Asia is a minority in this vast continent. For this reason, it is vital to establish a spirit of networking with others. Inter-parishes, inter-diocesan, inter-regional, and inter-episcopal conference networking and collaboration are ways to become a more synodal Church on mission. The spirit of greater collaboration eradicates the insular mentality and opens the eyes to a broader reality that would lead to sharing resources and the common good. Missional exchanges and immersion, as well as the sharing of resources (personnel, finance assistance, spiritual support, etc.), can generate greater awareness of a ‘church that exists for mission’ – the mission of the kingdom of God.

39. While the journey towards becoming a synodal Church on mission requires personal conversion, there is also a need to aim at creating structures (formal and informal) that support the synodal process. Parish structures, seminary formation, presbyteral, and episcopal bodies must be reviewed to integrate a synodal spirituality that promotes the journeying together of all the members of the people of God living in an evangelical way – *modus vivendi* and *modus operandi*.

E. The FABC and A More Synodal Missionary Church in Asia

40. The continental associations of bishops' conferences are a way for the Church to be synodal in mission. It is the role of the continental associations of bishops' conferences to promote all of its conferences on truly being synodal churches in mission. In the context of Asia, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences plays an integral role in moving the churches of Asia in a synodal way through a spirit of collegiality and synodality.
41. We acknowledge that being a synodal Church on mission begins at the local level, i.e., in the family, basic ecclesial communities, parishes, and dioceses. Ecclesiastical provinces, regional groupings, episcopal conferences, and continental associations of episcopal conferences offer local Churches opportunities for collaboration on common concerns. The FABC is encouraged to continue working with other continental associations on issues that affect the whole Church and humanity.
42. The importance of the continental level of groupings of churches is essential for synodality and collegiality. To be a synodal Church on mission we want to feel that we need to be in communion with the other churches as part of our nature or character of being a synodal missionary church. They are expressions of the Church as a communion of churches where there is care and solicitude for the other churches. We propose the following revisions of the Code of Canon Law:

Canon 342 §2 The synod of Bishops shall consult the continental associations of episcopal conferences to ensure greater communion, participation, and mission in the synodal process.

Can. 459 §1 Relations are to be fostered between episcopal conferences, especially neighboring ones, **and at the continental level**, in order to promote and defend whatever is for the greater good.

43. Among the functions of the FABC are facilitating the inter-communication and cooperation between local churches and bishops throughout Asia, identifying common pastoral priorities and seeking ways to respond to them, especially in an interfaith and ecumenical context.
44. For a more synodal Church on mission, the FABC can provide space, make a venue, or create a situation or occasion where the bishops' conferences can listen to and learn from each other and together discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches (cf. *Rev* 2:7). This process ultimately encourages all to listen together to the voice of the Holy Spirit by creating networks of churches. The General Conference of the FABC on the occasion of its 50th anniversary in 2022 is an example of this experience of collegiality and synodality.
45. The spirit of synodality provides occasions for the bishops and the local churches to build relationships with each other. The local churches grow in mutual knowledge of each other and concern for each other. The local churches help and motivate each other to be synodal churches on mission. Their coming together is a structure for collegiality and synodality towards a synodal Church on mission.
46. The FABC allows the Church to participate in ecumenical relations on a broader scale and further interreligious dialogue involving several churches over a wider area. Both witness the Church's commitment to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue or relations that should have a

positive impact at the local levels to benefit the local churches.

47. In a more synodal way, the FABC can provide a way for the local churches to share resources with one another. These resources include personnel, material goods, funds, spiritual riches, and expertise. Because the Holy Spirit has generously distributed his gifts to all the churches, each Church has something to offer to the other churches. This is done in humility, respect, and a spirit of generous sharing. The unity of mind and heart bears witness to the fact that we are one Body of Christ.
48. There are churches in Asia that are persecuted in different ways. A synodal church also seeks to stand by each other in moments of violence, discrimination, and xenophobia. The FABC can offer support and concern for “persecuted churches” or those with specific difficulties or challenges.
49. In summary, addressing these challenges requires a deep and continuing understanding of the local contexts and a commitment to synodality as a mode of being and living in the Asian episcopal conferences.

F. Conclusion

50. While there are still many issues to discuss, plans to implement, and mindsets to change, the Synthesis Report has given the churches in Asia a window into what took place at the First Session and to be able to live the experience vicariously through the delegates. There is hope and faith in the Second Session in October 2024. The synodal process has been renewed in many of the churches of Asia, and we have a responsibility to build a Church for everyone, by everyone – a Synodal Church on mission.

Toward a Synodal Church: The Challenge of the Catholic Church in Japan

Japan Catholic Bishops' Conference:

Ad Hoc Team for the Synod

May 6, 2024

1 Introduction

This report will introduce the "Walking Together" Church that the Catholic Church in Japan is aiming for after the first session of the 16th Ordinary General Conference of Synod of Bishops (October 2023). First, the current situation of the Catholic Church in Japan will be reported, followed by a reference to the efforts of the Church in Japan and the challenges that lie ahead.

1.1 Catholic Church in Japan

In Japan (population 123,250,274), Christians comprise 1% of the population. The Catholic Church has about 437,000 members or 0.034% of the population. The Catholic Church in Japan consists of 15 dioceses and 773 parishes.

In Japan, where the birthrate is declining and the population is aging rapidly, the Catholic Church has also been affected, with a noticeable aging of its congregation. In addition, the Japanese Catholic Church has the characteristics of a multinational and multicultural church. Many foreigners living in Japan, especially workers from Asia and South America, are important members of the Church, which forms a community of faith. In addition, the Catholic Church is widely recognized in Japanese society through various "charity activities" (schools, institutions) in addition to parishes.

Japan is threatened by large-scale natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes). In response to past natural disasters, the Catholic Church has walked alongside those who have suffered. Such an attitude has been recognized and accepted by non-Christian Japanese. This is the result of the Japanese Catholic Church's efforts since 1980 to become a "Synodal" Church. In other words, the Catholic Church in Japan has already been living the "Synodality" of "Walking Together."

2 The Challenge of the Catholic Church in Japan

The "Letter to the People of God" presented at the first session was introduced and explained to the faithful by the bishops of each diocese from time to time. To be a Synodal Church, the Catholic Church in Japan, instead of considering individual specific problems, we focused on the process of solving them. This was inspired by the following words of Pope Francis:

The Synod is about synodality, and not about this or that theme, and the important thing is how the reflection is done, that is, in a synodal way.

Therefore, we aim to spread and practice the "Conversation in the Spirit" adopted at the first session. The sharing of the Word of God is already widely practiced in the Catholic Church in Japan and also "Lectio Divina" is being conducted in many faith communities through small groups. Furthermore, due to COVID-19 from 2020, "communion" has been waning in communities of faith. Against this backdrop, we felt that the "Conversation in the Spirit" was essential to once again become a Church that walks together with the people.

2.1 Ad Hoc Team for the Synod

After the first session held in October 2023, the Japanese Catholic Bishops' Conference formed an Ad Hoc Team for the Synod composed of bishops, priests, consecrated and lay persons. To make the "Synodal method" widely known, the following points were decided to be implemented.

1. Handbook of Synod: To be prepared to make the Synodal Church known to a large number of people.
2. National Assembly of Synodality: To hold a National Assembly about Synodality in Japan to promote the "Conversation in the Spirit".
3. Initiatives in each diocese: To implement the "Conversations in the Spirit" in the dioceses to become a Synodal Church.

These three points will be discussed in detail.

2.2 Handbook of Synod

To make the Synodal Church known to a wider audience, we have begun our work on the Handbook, which will be published and ready for distribution by the end of June 2024. Since the beginning of the new century, our society has begun to focus on results. The Church, as a community of faith, has also been affected. The Catholic Church in Japan must not forget the essence of Synodality, which is "creating communion" (community), "bearing together"(co-responsibility), and "thinking and praying together" (communal discernment). We must aim to be an "inclusive" Church that does not exclude anyone.

2.3 National Assembly of Synodality

The Japanese National Assembly of Synodality was conducted as follows.

Date and Time: Thursday, March 7, 2024, 3:00 p.m. to Friday, March 8, 2024, 3:00 p.m.

Location: Japan Catholic Hall

Participants 68 persons

All bishops of each diocese: 17 persons

From each diocese: 45 persons (priests: 15, consecrated: 15, laity: 15)

Ad Hoc member: 4 members

Facilitators: 2 persons

Note: Archbishop of Nagasaki was absent due to illness, and one parish priest attended in his place.

Objectives 1. To experience the "Conversation in the Spirit" which expresses well the Synodal Church.

2. To discuss the current situation of our Catholic Church in Japan using the "Conversation in the Spirit" method, based on the "Synthesis Report: A Synodal Church in Mission".

2.3.1 Report on the "Conversation in the Spirit"

At the National Assembly, after receiving an explanation about the "Conversations in the Spirit," the participants were

divided into groups and practiced it twice. The content of the Conversation was chosen from the 20 themes presented in the "Synthesis Report: A Synodal Church in Mission". After each group's discussion, all participants shared the fruits of the Conversation.

1. Common theme: "Synodality: Experience and Understanding (from "Synthesis Report" Part I,1)"

The word "Synod": The Conversation in the Spirit took place around the word "Synod" from various positions and pastoral responsibilities. Above all, the importance of "walking together" was stressed. And "listening" was especially reiterated. We realized that by listening to others, we can free ourselves from assumptions and prejudices, and build relationships of mutual respect among people from different standpoints.

New Possibilities: Participants experienced that listening and sharing with an open heart is prayer itself and that the work of the Holy Spirit can be experienced through people sharing their hearts with God at the center. Even if some people are resistant towards Synodality, they cannot deny the work of the Holy Spirit in this way. Furthermore, there should be no disagreement that the process of "walking with" Jesus himself is more important than solving a problem.

The change in attitude, to emphasize process over problem-solving, will not be easy. It will take time. But here, we can see new possibilities for the Church.

A Church that accepts: Through the implementation of the "Synodal" process, the Church community will be transformed into a community that empathizes with the pain of others and with its pain. It should also become a community that accepts all people, a community that values relationships with foreign nationals, and a Church that welcomes people from different cultures and social minorities.

Our nature received from God: Such a Church is a Church that "walks together" with our Lord Jesus Christ, sharing the

pain and weaknesses with Him. It is a Church that opens a wide door to society and people. "Walking together" is the true image of human beings. It is a Church that values the true nature of human beings, which we are losing sight of. Of course, we must challenge the various problems and issues that exist in society, but we must also be a community of faith that accepts and respects people as human beings, a Church that continues to think, pray, and remember those who cannot come to the community, a Church that shares people's pain and joy, and that relates and supports each other with compassion and empathy, etc. Moreover, the "Communal Church" proposed by the Second Vatican Council already includes elements of "Synodality". This fact is the testimony of the grace of the Holy Spirit who has been with the Church throughout ages.

The work of the Holy Spirit: Also pointed out the necessity of valuing the Holy Spirit, who empowers the Church. The Holy Spirit brings us together. He transforms us into a Church that respects diversity, not uniformity. It also transforms us into a Church that takes on shared responsibility without being limited by loud voices or worldly norms. It takes time and effort to achieve "Synodality". The importance of finding hope while experiencing suffering similar to birth pains was pointed out. In addition, since the Church influences the world, it is required to listen to the voices of many people. This, too, is something we hope from the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Concrete Steps: Finally, a point was made about "Synodal" steps in the Japanese Church. Furthermore, some participants realized that after sharing with the "Conversations in the Spirit" method, they realized that they lacked an attitude of listening to others. Some participants also pointed out that the Japanese Church tends to be more top-down, and that such an attitude needs to be fundamentally changed. Other points that received attention included the experience of unity through the celebration of multilingual Masses, and the need to provide better educational support for minorities. Thus, thanks to the "Conversation in the Spirit," which was a first

experience for many of the participants, we were all able to face the specific challenges of the Church in Japan. The importance of "walking together" with people of different opinions and backgrounds was emphasized, and everyone realized that "listening" is essential to prevent differences of opinion from becoming conflicts.

2. Respective Groups' themes (6 groups)

"Entering the Community of Faith: Christian Initiation (from "Synthesis Report" Part I, 3)"

Rejoicing Together: In Japan, where the number of Christians is small, many people come to Church after already having some kind of religious experience. Therefore, it is necessary to share the experience of faith with them before they were baptized. Even after baptism, it is important to share personal encounters that led to baptism, the experience of the community of faith, the fellowship with those who gather in the Church, and the joy of encountering God in the Sacraments. The community of faith (parish community, etc.) as a church should be willing to support the baptized. It is wonderful to feel that there is someone in the Church who spiritually supports one's way of life. Furthermore, the Church needs to be a Church where people can carry the cross together even in difficult situations, a Church where people can feel comfortable as if it were their own home. Behind the joy we experience in the Church is the presence of the resurrected Jesus. We believe that those who have experienced Christian initiation in the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist will become people who will carry the joy of the Church in their lives.

"People in Poverty, Protagonists of the Church's Journey (from "Synthesis Report" Part I, 4)"

Feeling their "pain": In this group, participants reflected on their own "poverty" through specific reflection and prayer about vulnerable people (day laborers, the abused, the elderly, and the disabled) with whom they have worked. They also prayed about whether they had been complacent in their

support for the poor and the needy, and whether their judgments had contributed to further prejudice.

Despite these struggles, through the process of approaching the socially marginalized and excluded, the participants shared their experiences of knowing and feeling their "pain", which gradually transformed into "anger".

However, we also confirmed to each other the fact that the only way to make the energy of anger godly and holy is through prayer. Prayer creates space in the heart. It was pointed out that this fact is connected to what the "Conversation in the Spirit" is trying to do.

"A Church "out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation" (from "Synthesis Report" Part I, 5)"

Living with "Migrants": Like Japanese society, the Japanese Church is becoming increasingly multicultural and multilingual. This fact sends a new wind in the Church. Although the situation at each place is different, we could confirm to each other that everyone is working hard to become a multicultural and multi-lingual church. Instead of seeking a single answer, we must value the differences among the people who gather in our Church. We need to strive to turn differences into strengths rather than barriers. One of the group members made a particularly harsh comment about the term "foreigner", which is common in Japanese society. We all agreed with that. And the proposed term "migrant" was a step toward Synodality.

Listening to each other: The Japanese participants in this group felt the need to listen carefully to each other to understand each person's situation. There is a need for mutual understanding of the fact that there are differences in many respects between the migrants and the Japanese, who have different cultures and languages. Efforts to meet the needs of the migrants will be required, and the migrants will also need to be willing to learn more about Japan and Japanese society. From now on, both Japanese believers and migrant congregations have the task of carrying out their lifelong

formation as Christians. Also shared as a challenge was the vision of making the Church a safe place for the children of migrants. Through these efforts, we will become a church that "walks together" as the same "children of God.

"Church is Mission (from "Synthesis Report" Part II, 8)"

Involvement: First, it is important to get involved with people. There are many ways to get involved. Sometimes it is "welcoming", sometimes it is "going out," and sometimes it is "accompanying". However, it was emphasized that the involvement must always be an involvement that produces "healing" and leads to "healing". Without an attitude of involvement, there is no Evangelization.

Living the Gospel: Each person continually reassesses his or her values in daily life. The Church community continually reassesses its way by facing the Gospel. That each one of us may encounter one's own life and the being of the Church in the light of the Gospel.

Rediscovering the Driving Force of Mission: Those who have felt the joy of faith should not be able to avoid sharing the source of that joy, the Gospel. For this reason, we feel the need to deepen our connection with Jesus. We shared that we want to have the conviction to say with all our hearts, "I am glad I have faith. The joy of attending Mass and experiencing the joy of communion with our sisters and brothers supports the work of Evangelization. Through sharing, we encourage one another.

We should not be discouraged: It can be discouraging to see the decline in the number of believers. However, from what was shared, several points emerged that this reality poses for us. It is important to see this reality taken as an opportunity to cultivate creativity. We shared that it is also an opportunity to reconsider the reason for the existence of the Church. Some also shared that it was an opportunity to deepen our relationship with the community.

Points to note: When the word "propagating(布教)" is used, the image of teaching people "something" seems strong. However, it is more important to "witness", "accompany", and "walk together" rather than to teach. It is more important to help people recognize the voice of God speaking in their hearts than to teach them one step at a time. Moreover, "Evangelization" is not something we can do on our own. It is fundamental to remember that we are collaborators and the protagonist is the Holy Spirit.

"Women in the Life and Mission of the Church (from "Synthesis Report" Part II, 9)"

- When women are vibrant, the church is vibrant.
- In the group, we were able to talk about the various good qualities that women have.
- It is men who start wars.
- Consecrated women are considered cheap labor. A mechanism is needed to solve this problem.
- To overcome the differences between men and women, we believe that the time has come to call for making the importance of the "individual" visible in the Church.

"Towards a Listening and Accompanying Church (from "Synthesis Report" Part II, 16)"

Current Challenges: Current challenges include people being hurt in the church, priests not being cooperative, people at the top becoming isolated, and rather than living "co-responsibility", they are living "co-irresponsibility", difficulty in listening and confronting opposite opinions. There are many of bullying and harassment in the Church.

Directions to aim: "Accompanying", "creating a safe place", "thinking together", "working as a team", "the importance of calling out", "the importance of formation of listening", "taking time", and "listening model as Jesus". By becoming a "listening" Church, there is hope for our future.

2.4 Initiatives in each diocese:

As a result of the Japanese National Assembly of Synodality held in March, efforts are being made in various regions to create a Synodal Church. In particular, the "Conversations in the Spirit" are being implemented in each diocese. Little by little, the "Synodal method" is spreading.

3 Summary

The above is a report on the challenge for the Catholic Church in Japan to become a Synodal Church. We are thankful that we are gradually becoming able to feel and share how the Holy Spirit is leading our Church.

To further become a Synodal Church, we would like to point out some challenges, especially in terms of the "Conversation in the Spirit".

Prayer: Participants of the "Conversation in Spirit" must offer to the group what they have prayed in silence. This approach is novel to the participants. It will be necessary to create an atmosphere in the Church that recognizes that all prayer is wonderful. This will require a deeper understanding of "*sensus fidei*".

Dynamic community: Many of the participants could not pray very well at first in the "Conversation in the Spirit", but after listening to the prayers of the group members, they gradually experienced a change in the content of their prayers from abstract to concrete. It will always be necessary to feel the Holy Spirit working in the community. To do this, we need to be aware that faith is not personal, but communal.

The Clergy: At the National Assembly of Synodality, the sharing of the bishops gave courage and hope to the participants. Many were also encouraged by the attitudes and words of the bishops and priests in the "Conversation in the Spirit" held in each diocese. This fact suggests a new way of ministry by the clergy. On the other hand, some priests remain stubborn to the end. The Synodal Church is a "walking together" Church. We must be aware of the fact that this is not unrelated to the way priests live their ministry.

Discernment: The last step of the "Conversations in the Spirit", "thinking, praying, and recognizing together" (discernment), seems to be difficult. This will require repeated practice of the method. The "Conversation in the Spirit" is not just a methodology, but an invitation to deep conversation and fellowship. In today's society, where people tend to focus only on results, it is necessary to further emphasize the importance of the process of Synodality.

Aim: It must be further emphasized that the "Conversation in the Spirit" is necessary for a community of faith to create a pastoral plan. In the future, it may be emphasized that all organizations of the Church are encouraged to create a pastoral plan in this way.

With our Sisters and Brothers: We must not forget that the Catholic Church in Japan is in a multicultural and multireligious atmosphere. To live together with sisters and brothers, the "Conversation in the Spirit" method can be effective.

Finally, We, the Ad Hoc Team for the Synod are convinced that the encounter with the wonderful methodology of the "Conversation in the Spirit" will make the Church even more Synodal. The 16th Ordinary Session of the Synod of Bishops, which has been held since 2021, has had a great impact on the Catholic Church in Japan.

XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops
**Synthesis of the Catholic Church in Korea for the Second
Session**

Introduction

1. This Synthesis, in light of the *Synthesis Report* which is the outcome of the First Session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, is the compilation and reflection of the dioceses' contributions that contain the deliberation of the Korean dioceses on the realization of synodality, guided by the question: "How can we be a synodal Church on mission?" Out of the 16 dioceses including the Military Ordinariate, a total of 13 dioceses provided their contributions, except for some dioceses that were unable to submit theirs due to various circumstances. This Synthesis is a summary of the proposed texts after due deliberation of them in the Korean context. To this end, meetings (a meeting of laity, religious and clergy researchers of theology, canon law, and the pastoral ministry; a meeting of the working group for drafting the Synthesis) took place.

I. The Experience and Understanding of the Church in Korea on Synodal Journey

The Joy and Hope Experienced by the Church in Korea during the Synodal Process

2. The synodal journey, which commenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, became an inflection point for the Church amid its steep downturn to reaffirm and live out her identity and mission. The synodal process has sparked a commitment and desire in many to listen and dialogue with each other. Through participation in the synodal process, we witnessed a lot of members of the Church being renewed in the Holy Spirit.

The active voice and participation of lay people affirmed the potential of the Church in Korea, and the richness of the pastoral care carried out with lay people, was discovered. It was also found out that lay people are always ready to provide their opinions at every opportunity to speak. Priests, who were initially skeptical, were also changed by this experience. Sometimes they confronted

with issues of authority and responsibility in the Church. However, priests had a valuable experience where companionship grew and allowed them to understand and embrace each other, as they shared their pastoral concerns and pains with frankness. The synod became an opportunity to have hope that the Church can be changed in real.

Challenges and Obstacles during the Synodal Process

3. Yet, as the synodal process continued over two years, we observed a significant loss of momentum, even in dioceses that had enthusiastically participated in the initial diocesan phase. A few dioceses followed a proper synodal process in drafting their contributions for the preparation of the second session, while most contributions were written, centered around a single diocesan department or a person in charge. A common reason mentioned as challenges of the synodal process was the sense of distance and difficulty of the term 'synodality' itself. In the current situation where, even priests feel the term 'synodality' difficult and unfamiliar, we realized that a need to make continuous efforts to understand this challenging term. Also, there was hesitancy on practicing 'conversation in the Spirit' because it was felt difficult to understand.

4. It was reflected that there have not been enough opportunities for the participation of the bishops and priests of the Church in Korea in the synodal phases to date. It was also mentioned that the schedule and plan presented by the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops pose limitation on the active participation of the particular Churches. Therefore, it was worried that such an experience of limitation in fully practicing synodality in the Church would lead to skepticism about the Synod itself.

Experiencing 'Conversation in the Spirit'

5. Positive experiences of those who participate in 'conversation in the Spirit,' which is the synod's method, have been spread. The Most Rev. Peter CHUNG Soon-Taick, Archbishop of Seoul, who participated as a delegate of the Church in Korea in the first session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, shared his report on participation in the session with the Korean

bishops. Archbishop Peter CHUNG also explained that the Archdiocese of Seoul sets the goal of “deepening the experience of synodality and experiencing conversation in the Spirit” for this diocesan synodal journey, and conducted ‘conversation in the Spirit’ at various levels. He said that the method has also been introduced in the formation of young people, in particular, preparing for the 2027 World Youth Day in Seoul, with good results.

Those who participated in ‘conversation in the Spirit’ are experiencing the importance of spiritual experience that strengthens their faith, the meaning of silence in recognizing how the Holy Spirit guided, the meaning of the Church as a community of individuals (*Ecclesia*), and what it is to seek together God’ will. Those who have experienced the ‘conversation in the Spirit’ as a truly synodal way, are calling for its adoption in meetings and gatherings of the various Church groups. It was also identified that formation of facilitators to promote conversation and discernment is indispensable for spreading ‘conversation in the Spirit.’

II. Local Church Level: Synodal Church in the Mission of Proclaiming the Gospel

Entering into Faith Community: Christian Initiation

6. It is necessary to prepare an opportunity to experience and live synodality in the sacraments of Christian initiation. Catechesis for catechumens in the Church in Korea ought to focus not only on the transmitting the fundamental doctrine but also on *kerygma* and *mistagogia*. Accordingly, more efforts are needed to ensure that the delivery of the Church’s teachings is accompanied by sharing life in the Word of God, experiencing communion of the community in the liturgy, and practicing charity as missionary disciples. Catechumens should have the opportunity to experience the richness of grace through a gradual rite of initiation, according to the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* and adapted to the context of the local Church.

7. It is important to introduce the method of ‘conversation in the Spirit’ into catechesis in order to listen, dialogue, and discern. Especially in preparation for the sacraments of initiation, the

People of God should be made aware that they have equal Baptismal dignity and differentiated co-responsibility for the common mission of evangelization which makes all the faithful active agents of evangelization. Based on this experience, opportunities can be provided to realize synodality, starting from the process of preparing for the sacraments of initiation. The synodal spirit should be learned not only through the sacraments of initiation, but also through the various forms of communal prayer and exercises of popular devotions.

8. Some pointed out that the rigidity in liturgical celebrations is regarded as an obstacle to feel the joy of faith. We need to consider the celebration and preparation of liturgy in a synodal way. Due to the limitations in active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy with its current form, there was a call not only for inculturation of liturgy at the level of local Churches but also for a liturgical renewal at the level of universal Church. In addition, in order to integrate liturgy into the lives of the faithful, it is necessary to find ways for clergy, religious, and lay people to collaborate and fulfill their own roles, starting from the liturgy preparation. In particular, an experience was shared that it is very helpful for priests to have time with the faithful, to share each other's reflections on the Sunday Gospel and then prepare homilies inspired by the concerns and considerations of the faithful in their life situations.

9. The poor and the marginalized can be excluded from the sacramental life of the Church. There was a suggestion to find ways to enable them to be active participants in the liturgy and sacraments of the Church rather than objects in need of help.

A Poor Church for the Poor, Protagonists in the Church's Journey

10. The most frequently mentioned theme in the diocesan opinions is about the poor in the synodal Journey. The Church's option for the poor is not a matter of almsgiving, but is intrinsic to its nature. However, there was a reflection that the environment and structure of the Church today is increasingly becoming distant from the poor. We must pay a particular attention lest the material resources the Church has should be obstacles to fulfilling her

mission of evangelization.

11. It needs to reflect on whether the poor have been objectified in need of special pastoral care, and on the current pastoral structures and identities that allows this. We came to realize that in the Church today, the poor are alienated from the Church community due to its lack of efforts to accompany them. The marginalized who need closeness of the Church are the disabled, the young, the sick, the elderly, refugees and migrants, North Korean refugees, the homeless, and LGBTQ individuals. There are those who experience not only economic poverty but also relative poverty, psychological poverty, and spiritual poverty. Furthermore, there was an opinion of considering the following as the poor in need of accompaniment within the Church: those in marriage impediments, lukewarm faithful, mentally and physically ill clergy, religious who have forgotten their initial vocation and are mired in mannerism, and lay people who are fully engaged in the Church and the world but do not live out the Gospel.

12. In response to the question, “What is needed to put the poor at the center of the Church?”, the encounter with the poor is important, and support and accompaniment based on a personal encounter is needed. It was testified that encountering the poor raises awareness and deepens experience of walking together. It was also suggested that the reality and situations of the poor is so diverse, therefore it is necessary to be attentive, recognize and accept each person’s situation rather than treating them with same method and style. To this end, the Church should not be content with providing pastoral care to those who currently attend the Sunday Mass or Church activities; instead, she needs to make a change and decision to reach out and deeply enter into the lives of the poor.

13. As a concrete way of placing the poor at the center of the Church, during the pastoral visits, diocesan bishops should visit or invite the faithful in the parish community who are suffering or their families in need, to have a pastoral encounter with them. This could be a symbolic expression of preferential concern for the poor. In recent years, soup kitchens for the poor and restaurants for

youth have been established in some dioceses. These initiatives aim to combat social isolation by sharing a meal and solving food insecurity, and a lot of the faithful voluntarily join in the initiatives.

14. The Church in Korea has made some contributions to Korean society in line with its development, as she has been engaged herself to various forms of educational, medical, and social welfare activities. However, as the social welfare system becomes more sophisticated and specialized, the ecclesiastical social welfare organizations involved in it are also required to have a high level of expertise and efficiency. Some of these specialized ecclesiastical organizations are sometimes at risk of losing their Christian identity. Accordingly, as a way to solve this, efforts should be made to integrate social ministry with activities within the Church.

The Church is a Mission

15. The Church should show herself going forth rather than remaining within herself. The Church should be a good Samaritan who cares for the poor and those in need of mercy in our world. To do this, the Church must be renewed to be more open to the world, to welcome all the people, and to be present among them.

16. In the Church in Korea, where Catholics make up 11.3% of the total population of the Republic of Korea, there is a narrow understanding of 'mission' as a proselytism, the attempt to convert pagans into Catholics through baptism and thus expand the Church' influence. Accordingly, there is a need for a change of perception to consider mission as the essence of the Church who proclaims the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Above all, those who believe in Christ need training and formation to recognize mission as the core of their identity and to learn how to live a life style as those who are sent by the Lord. In addition, it is necessary to discern together how to live out our unique mission with co-responsibility. In this process of communal discernment, a sense of co-responsibility can be formed. In addition, it is necessary to examine the reality in which the missionary activities of the diocesan and parish organizations are recognized as ones merely related to the ecclesiastical organizations, such as committee for evangelization, department of mission, and committee for mission. Following the example of the reform of the Roman Curia, a change

in institutions and structures are required to enable the whole Church to become a Church in mission.

17. Many dioceses emphasized the importance of the family as the pillar of the Christian community and various pastoral efforts for their sanctification and renewal, in order that the Church can commit herself to her mission through synodal renewal. The Church should help the domestic Church to fulfill its priestly, prophetic and royal functions through prayer at home, evangelization activities and charitable services, encouraging them to evangelize themselves and evangelize other families to be agents of evangelization. To this end, the Church should provide a lot support for the domestic Church so that the words of God and faith can sprout in the cell of the 'family.' The Church also needs to continually emphasize that parents/grandparents should be the first missionaries to pass on the faith to their own children/grandchildren.

18. The Church in Korea should continue to think and work on how to proclaim the Gospel in the digital environment, which has become a new area of life in our time. Especially, during the dark and gloomy period of the pandemic when all church gatherings including Masses were suspended, the Church in Korea has carried out missionary work through SNS (social network service) and internet, etc. The Church offered live-streamed Masses through YouTube and uploaded religious lectures or sermons on various digital platforms.

In order to animate digital missionary work, it is necessary to seriously study and integrate analog missionary work and pastoral care with digital missionary work. We should strike a dynamic balance between the two, complementing and systematically balancing them as we move forward. In the digital field, the message of faith, "Christ is alive and with us," must be proclaimed in such a way that it can be incorporated into modern life. Missionary work in the digital world is also needed to construct and operate digital systems in an evangelical way, beyond simply uploading evangelical contents on various digital platforms. It also remains a challenge to form a cooperative network among current active digital missionaries.

Women in the Life and Mission of the Church

19. The current ratio of female Catholics in the Church in Korea is about 57%. However, the proportion of women is indeed higher among the believers who attend Sunday Mass and actively participate in the life of the Church. While women play a lot of roles in the life and mission of the Church, their participation in leadership roles and in the liturgical and pastoral ministries is very limited. For example, both men and women lay ministers can be canonically delegated as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, but in the Church in Korea it is mainly allowed to men. In addition, lay leaders of parish pastoral councils and other ecclesiastical organizations are mostly made up of men. Against this backdrop, it was revealed that many believers still have feelings of awkwardness, discomfort, or stereotypes about the idea of a women serving as leaders or distributing the Holy Communion.

20. It takes a more conscious effort to change a long-standing culture. Specifically, we need to increase the experience and culture of having women in leadership roles, such as electing male and female lay leaders of the parish pastoral councils equally or having them serve alternately. There is also a need to actively encourage and empower women to play a vital leading role in ecclesiastical organizations. Lay women's services should be expanded to ensure their active participation in the whole range of liturgical and pastoral ministries of the Church, such as catechists, acolytes, lectors, ministries of pastoral care for the poor or families, and other ministry of listening and accompanying in the Church.

It is also important to ensure that a culture of dialogue is fostered during the priestly formation. It should be natural for seminarians to realize that they can learn from lay people including women. In the current situation where most seminary professors are male and clergy, we need to open the door more widely to allow lay men and women to participate in priestly formation.

Consecrated Life

21. In this synodal process, which was conducted in a diocese-centered manner, men and women religious institutes did not have many opportunities to participate. There were almost little

discussions about consecrated life in the written contribution by each diocese. In a minority opinion, both clergy and religious expressed disappointment at the lack of communication, and noted that inequality and lack of respect for women religious still persist within the Church. Additionally, as religious convents experienced difficulties in celebrating the liturgy during the pandemic, the need for research on the celebration of the liturgy by female religious was suggested.

In addition, regarding the apostolate of religious, unlike in the past when they settled for the parish system, the ways to enter the local community and practice the apostolate for the poor and marginalized are being found out. It was also suggested that they be entrusted with 'ministries of pastoral care for the poor' at the diocesan level and provide them with support and authority accordingly.

Priests and Bishops in a Synodal Church

22. There were opinions stating that clericalism still remains in the Church in Korea: decision-making processes are clergy-centered, church administration is bureaucratic, and clergy exemption of responsibility is commonplace. It said that the personal and pastoral relationship between clergy and the laity has been eroded, leading many lay people to react with cynicism and view clergy as just workers. Clericalism has also been blamed for the emphasis on a stubborn hierarchy of superiority and inferiority even among the priests, which hinders communication and an encounter, and leads to intergenerational conflict. Clericalism is also found among some religious and lay people who are prone to elitism. The diocesan contributions state that we need to break free from the error of seeing the office of ministry as power and turning the Church into an arena for self-aggrandizement.

23. To increase transparency and a culture of accountability that has been emphasized during this synodal process, it was suggested to introduce the procedure to regularly review how priests are performing their duties. While these requests and suggestions are refreshing in that it encourages clergy to fulfill their mission as ministers of communion and service, there were worries in that it can be one-sided and coercive. In short, the priority now is to build

a relationship of mutual trust through dialogue and communication. If this relationship is not well-established before the verification procedure is put into operation, much confusion will arise. However, it was also suggested that to build a relationship of mutual trust among the members of the Church, transparent and objective performance review on the processes of how priests perform their duties and the results, is necessary.

24. It was also emphasized that the co-responsibility of the diocesan priesthood concerning the performance of priests' duties. When priests show an arbitrary and exclusive attitude in performing their duties, it frequently results in a pastoral bias, a drain on pastoral enthusiasm, and the emotional isolation of priests themselves. To overcome this, there should be pastoral discussion, mutual counseling, and collaboration among priests. Cooperation of priests, between priests serving diocesan departments and pastors, and between bishop and his priests should be further promoted. As an attempt to do this, there was a proposal to further revitalize the District Priests' Meeting. The proposal, is to create a model of communication and collaboration for sufficient dialogue and sharing. Small groups of priests can be organized based on topics of interest and priests, religious, and lay collaborators working in the diocesan curia will be invited in case it is needed.

25. The diocesan bishop plays a decisive role in setting up the overall pastoral direction of the diocese, promoting the participation of laity, religious, and priests in synodal life, and operating participatory structures within the diocese. Thus, the bishop himself strives to live out the spirit of synodality and to have the passion to embody the spirit in all areas. He should make his identity as the "father of all" and the "sacramental nature of the Episcopate" more visible (cf. XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Synthesis Report of the First Session*, 12d). To this end, it is important that bishops communicate with the pastoral workers and share their difficulties and concerns while having a first-hand experience of the pastoral reality of the community through regular pastoral visits and on-site exposures. There is also a case where the diocesan bishop, having pastoral

visitation on a regular basis, makes eucharistic adoration and exposition, and holds meetings with priests and lay representatives. Through this, we can create a space for spiritual and dialogical encounters which are less bureaucratic and more relational.

Synodal Approach to Formation

26. It was realized in common that a formation should be organized in a synodal way. Rather than one-sided lectures or training as in the past, it is a method of helping a community comprised of an appropriate number of people, sharing the words of God and their daily experiences and thus moving forward on a journey of discernment together. The sharing of the words of God and life, which has been widely practiced in the Church in Korea, needs to be further developed because it is suitable for this purpose. It is an educational method and a synodal meeting that seeks to discover, in a conversation, how to live in the world as Christians.

27. As suggested in the *Synthesis Report*, it is the best to enable laity, consecrated and ordained ministers to, whenever possible, participate in the joint formation programs of them (cf. *Synthesis Report*, 14k). In the Church in Korea, this method of formation has been often conducted in small ecclesial communities training programs, in which clergy, religious, and laity learn together how to plan, discuss, and make decisions about the common pastoral tasks of the parish. This approach encourages the entire People of God to recognize and practice their co-responsibility for pastoral care in a given environment while being conscious of the uniqueness and differences of each member of the People of God.

28. It was emphasized that to overcome clericalism, the Church in Korea, above all, must examine the current state of priestly formation in Korea, whether it shows authoritarian and formalistic features. The lack of mutual respect between formators and seminarians as well as insufficient human formation during the initial formation can be an obstacle to the way of communion and communication, and a catalyst to the spread of clericalism. Seminarians can become well-formed ecclesial ministers in the future if they fully experience spirit of *diaconia* and care,

forgiveness and reconciliation, and if they are accustomed to a culture of dialogue from the outset of their formation. They also need to be always in connection with the everyday life of the people of God rather than being closed in the seminary formation. In this way, they will be able to live out synodality as true ministers of God. Along with that, the need to develop a better system and program for ongoing priestly formation at the level of the Church in Korea was pointed out. It was because the formation of priests is mostly performed at diocesan annual workshops and retreats for priests. Ongoing priestly formation after ordination should be carried out with a synodal perspective.

29. It was also suggested that today lay people should not only be objects but also co-responsible subjects of formation (cf. *Synthesis Report*, 14c). It is possible by providing lay people with opportunities to participate in various formation programs as lecturers, coordinators, evaluators and full-time formators with their expertise. Expansion of opportunities for religious and lay people to participate in the seminary formation will be an effective sign. It was also pointed out that the Church pays less attention to the specialized formation of lay people compared to her attention to the formation of priests. Currently, in Korea, lay people mostly work in the administration of parishes and Church organizations. Lay ministers in charge of forming and accompanying the faithful with responsibility and authority, are needed. In particular, there was an opinion suggesting the establishment of a diocesan committee for the formation of laity and their utilization.

Participatory Bodies: Diocesan Pastoral Council and Parish Pastoral Council

30. On this occasion, as expressed in the first session, many dioceses also opined on the need for participatory bodies in view of institutional renewal for the concrete realization of synodality. In particular, it was suggested that along with a reflection on authentic role and function to realize synodality, efforts should be made to give the consultative bodies proper place. For this, the pastoral councils and the finance councils are to be established. There was an opinion that to facilitate a pastoral structure and environment placing the People of God at the center of the parish, priority should be given to

make a change in the diocesan pastoral structure. To this end, the diocesan pastoral council should become a structure where discussions and decisions are made together, so that within the Church, listening, accompaniment, and co-responsibility can be institutionalized and carried out as a culture.

31. However, there raised opinions that the existing pastoral council, both on diocesan and parish level, are insufficient to express the diversity of the People of God, and that the lack of information for discussion prevents the opinions of the faithful from being properly reflected. As regards the parish pastoral council, it was pointed out that its role is focused on executing the pastor's decisions rather than providing consultation. Therefore, from its constitution to the roles, the pastoral councils must have an institutional setting on which parish and diocesan activities can be carried out based on mutual respect and cooperation among all members of the People of God. From this perspective, a diocese in Korea collected the opinions from all parish pastoral councils around their districts, discussed them together, and finally made them converged into the diocese pastoral council. And the diocese invited the representatives of young people and of the apostolic organizations for devotional practice, religious, along with a representative of each district to participate in the diocesan pastoral council.

32. There was also an opinion that under the collaboration of the pastoral council, other institutional efforts for realizing synodality are needed to expand the place of sharing. It was pointed out that there is still no room for lay people to make their voices heard and actively participate in the life of the Church. It is therefore necessary to prepare comfortable spaces where all members of the People of God can speak up more boldly and listen to each other. In this regard, to listen to the diverse voices of the People of God, a diocese in Korea set out a project entitled, 'conversation with the People of God.' It seems an encouraging initiative by which an appropriate participatory body can be developed and established to live out synodality in the local Church's own situation.

33. During the synodal process, certain dioceses renewed pastoral councils or revised their statutes in accordance with the

spirit of synodality. However, special attention and effort from the diocesan bishop is required for their sustainable presence. In many cases, the councils are only in name or fail to be operated in the spirit of synodality. If it is not embodied in structures and processes, the style of synodality is nothing but a rhetoric, and if they are not continuously lived out, its processes and events become empty formalities (cf. *Preparatory Document*, n. 27).

III. Level of Groupings of Churches: the Episcopal Conference and the FABC

Efforts to Implement Synodality at the Level of Episcopal Conference

34. It was asked to transform the structure for listening or collecting opinions of the General Assembly, the supreme decision-making body of the CBCK, to be more synodal. Most of the agenda discussed at the CBCK General Assembly is converged through stages such as the meetings of diocesan directors, but the structure should be transformed to a structure of involving all the People of God by heeding various voices more broadly. It was proposed that the Church in Korea should adopt the method of ‘conversation in the Spirit’ in which bishops, along with priests, religious, and lay representatives, sit at a round table to have preliminary discussion before the General Assembly, as the first session of the Synod Assembly did. In a broad outlook, it is worth considering introducing a synodal structure such as the National Pastoral Congress, held forty years ago to celebrate the 200th birth anniversary of the Catholic Church in Korea, or the Plenary Council recently held in Australia.

35. The desire to deepen the discussion of the General Assembly was also expressed. In the Church in Korea today, there is an urgent need for inter-diocesan sharing, solidarity, and collaboration to deal with the gap between them. In addition, all dioceses should, through the CBCK, make a common effort to address various social and ecclesiastical issues that demand participation of the whole Korean society. Therefore, the CBCK General Assembly should aim to deliberate and discuss in depth the challenges of the times facing the Church in Korea. It was suggested that rather than taking decision on a number of agendas

to meet the deadline, in-depth discussion and reflection should be made for a mid-term and long-term vision for the Church's mission of evangelization. To do this, it is necessary to delegate the authority to working groups so that they can decide diverse administrative matters in their meetings.

36. It was raised to think over the cultural aspects for the realization of synodality. This includes efforts to diffuse throughout the Church a culture of listening and dialogue, service and sharing, and hospitality. It is needed to overcome the rigidity of the Church, including calling bishops and priests with excessively honorific titles and respect. There was also a request to reflect, at the level of the CBCK, on such a rigid culture and environment of the Church that hinders the realization of synodality. It was also expected to officially state what efforts are needed to deepen and spread a synodal culture in the Church in Korea.

37. It was proposed that in preparation of the implementation phase after the results of the second session of the Synod Assembly to be held in October, 2024 will be returned to the local Churches, a permanent synodal structure should be established at the level of the CBCK and particular Churches to ensure practice and spread of synodality. To make the sustainable practice of synodality, a main axis for in-depth study and diffusion of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation and relative documents at the level of the Church in Korea is required. It was hoped that the Synod would not end as an event but would lead, even with small paces, to realize the 'inculturation of synodality' in daily life and faith. There was a hope to continue to walk the synodal journey as a way of responding appropriately to the consultation of the People of God and experiencing the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the circulation of consultation and response.

The Korean-Japanese Bishops' Colloquium and the FABC

38. Since 1996, the CBCK and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan (CBCJ) have held the Korean-Japanese Bishops' Colloquium every year, except during the pandemic. This bond of communion between bishops of both countries is expanded to exchanges of young people and *fidei donum* priests. Efforts have

been made to reconcile the painful historical relationship between the two countries, in addition to the efforts made to address social and environmental issues for the realization of justice. On the other hand, in 2022, the Korean bishops actively participated in the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), striving to pursue harmony and unity in Christ by walking a common path with all the Asian Churches in their diversity. In solidarity with the FABC, the CBCK will be committed to evangelizing Asia and carrying out the common mission entrusted to the Church in Asian continent.

Conclusion

39. Through the *Synthesis of the Catholic Church in Korea* in preparation for the first phase, the Church in Korea suggested to the universal Church five key points to exercise synodality. And those suggestions were deepened in the *Synthesis of the Catholic Church in Korea for the Continental Assembly of Asia*, drawn up in response to the *Working Document for the Continental Stage*. In preparation for the forthcoming second session, we wrote this document through reading and reflecting on the *Synthesis Report*, the result of the first session, in the context of the Church in Korea, so that it can be a suggestion to the whole Church and a commitment to ourselves.

The synodal journey of the Church of the third millennium is not just walking with resolutions and commitments. Because it includes the cultural foundations that have been built over a long period both within society and the Church. It is often difficult to discern the right path to take, and to adapt necessary instruments. However, since the beginning of the Synod, we have experienced, directly and indirectly, some wonderful examples of synodality lived out under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the whole Church. The Church in Korea will take the next step in the synodal journey, walking together with the universal Church and listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

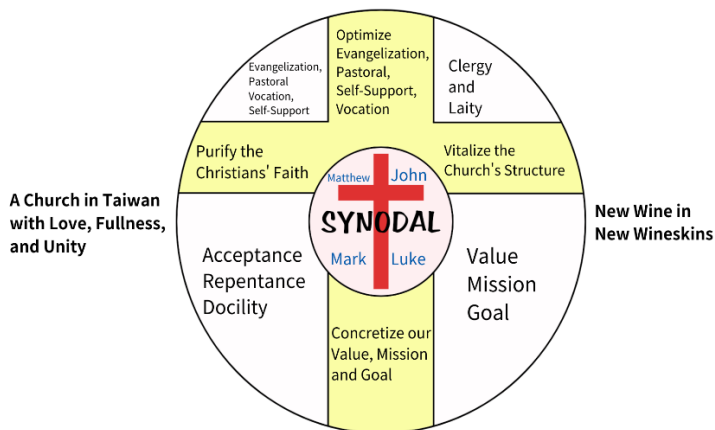
Synthesis Report of CRBC for the Synod of Bishops, 2024 (2nd session)

The *Chinese Regional Bishops' Conference* (CRBC) extended its invitation to bishops, clergy, consecrated persons, and laity to collaboratively partake in reflection and in the elaboration of propositions, in light of the work sheet provided by the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops.

I. Synodality in the Church of Taiwan and its Missionary Dimension

1. The relationship between bishops, clergy, consecrated persons, and lay associations

The following graphic visualizes the description of synodality in view of its application in the context of the Church in Taiwan according to the Taiwanese cultural ethos:



1.1. Revitalizing the ecclesiastical structure: confronting the evangelization challenges and the impact of contemporary culture resulting from societal transformations

Historically, missionaries not only preached the Gospel but also contributed to the establishment of Catholic schools, hospitals, and parish churches. They extended material aid to the disadvantaged population of those days, thereby

embodying the compassionate essence of Christ's teachings and addressing the holistic needs of the people as individuals. However, with the rapid evolution of societal dynamics and the pervasive influence of liberal ideologies, a significant tension arises between the technology-centered lifestyle and values embraced by the new generation and the entrenched traditions of the Church. This necessitates a nuanced approach and proactive adaptation to contemporaneous paradigms, ensuring alignment with prevailing cultural currents while remaining unwavering to the timeless principles contained in the Gospel.

1.2. Optimizing self-supporting evangelization strategies and fostering priestly vocations: a collective co-responsibility and participation of the laity as regards formation and challenges

In light of the dearth of resources and cultivation for self-supporting evangelization within the local Church of Taiwan, a significant portion of the faithful remains unacquainted with basic catechism and commandments. Due to the multiple challenges in evangelization, pastoral care, parish self-support, and priestly vocations, it is imperative to focus on the greatest commandments – *“Love the Lord your God above all”* and *“Love your neighbor as yourself”* – to reflect and to embody the grace received with a spirit of synodality.

1.3. Purifying the Christians' faith in the Truth: embracing current challenges and the need for tangible paths to repentance

In the local Church of Taiwan, the faithful predominantly undergo formation focused on pastoral methodology and liturgical training. However, the implementation of various institutional reforms has frequently been impeded by entrenched habits, thus posing challenges to the

advancement of new ministries and the maturation of faith. Despite the establishment of numerous social welfare institutions, Catholic hospitals, and schools, alongside the provision of specific services for the marginalized, their independent operation often impedes collaborative efforts. Consequently, there arises a critical necessity to delve deeper into the content of the Catholic faith, to undergo genuine conversion, and to strive towards a unified Christian life that harmonizes beliefs with actions.

1.4. New wine in new wineskins: a Church in Taiwan with love, fullness, and unity

1.4.1. Promoting a profound exploration of the identity of being a baptized person, the grace and vocation bestowed upon each member of the People of God through the Sacrament of Baptism. By doing so, individual Christian faithful can become more deeply engaged in ministry and service, becoming authentic witnesses to the Lord's teachings. Such a deepened awareness will foster greater enthusiasm for evangelization, active participation inside the Church, and collaborative efforts with the clergy fortifying a missionary and synodal Church. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon all members of the People of God to ensure the financial stability of the Church.

1.4.2. The People of God are called to delve into the depths of the divine Truth, particularly in understanding the essence of "holiness" and to respond to the universal call to holiness. This entails a continuous journey of conversion and a commitment to embodying a coherent Christian lifestyle. Moreover, fostering a culture of synodality necessitates the promotion of equality of dignity among the diverse identities

throughout all kinds of the church communities, fostering collaboration across multiple platforms. Special attention must be dedicated to addressing the needs of the needy and marginalized people of the society.

2. Synodal parishes and dioceses in communion for evangelization

2.1. The formation of the People of God should be continuous throughout every phase of their lives

2.1.1. Catechism Classes: Getting to know the Church better, facilitating an encounter with God and initiation into the Church for non-Catholics

Reviewing the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the content of catechesis and catechetical pedagogy are deepened and strengthened through faculty development, the practice of the *Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults* (RCIA), and catechesis during the Eucharistic celebration. Both the seminary and the dioceses in Taiwan have instituted programs for nurturing pedagogical skill and setting up catechetical instruction, ensuring a continuous dissemination of the Gospel in manners that resonate more deeply with believers and harmonize with cultural contexts.

2.1.2. Bible Study: acquire an adequate understanding of the Word of God and discern one's mission of evangelization

Guiding the faithful in exploring salvation history and showing how the Word intertwines with the encounter and interaction between individual believers.

2.1.3. Small community of faith: Exemplifying Christian life in the parochial context, fostering a culture of

synodality, of collaborative commitment among believers

In the everyday life of small communities of faith, there is a concerted emphasis on the importance of love and service, on the deepening of one's faith and its practical applications through the study of the Scriptures, on communion in terms of celebrating together the Holy Mass and on the participation in parish pastoral and evangelization councils.

2.2. At the diocesan level, organize extensive pastoral evangelization initiatives to foster a sense of interconnectedness and collaboration among parish communities

It is the duty of the bishop to foster solidarity and unity in the parish communities. Major diocesan assemblies serve to re-ignite the zeal of the believers, so that they become willing to fully commit themselves. Additionally, such gatherings can instill a sense of collective assurance in the Church among non-Catholics (by means of events like *March for Life, National Eucharistic Congress, Tainan Evangelization 400*, and Interdenominational Movement for Christian Unity).

3. The relation between consultation and deliberation in organizational decision-making processes, and the participation and responsibility of women

3.1. Decision-making in organizational processes and the participation of laity

3.1.1. Among the historical ecclesiastical structures in the Church of Taiwan, the Association of *National Council of Lay Apostolate* stands out as a close collaborator in advancing pastoral care and evangelization within parishes and dioceses. Comprising lay members, its inception aimed at supporting parish priests and

bishops in their respective ministry, developing it, reflecting on the ethos of lay involvement in the post-Vatican II era.

- 3.1.2. In 2022, CRBC called upon all the dioceses and parishes to foster a return to the principles outlined in the *Code of Canon Law* by transforming the *National Council of the Lay Apostolate* into the *Parish Pastoral & Evangelization Council* (PPEC). This shift aims to authentically embody synodality across various church bodies and in different church responsibilities, the priests always assuming pastoral leadership roles. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, parishioners are invited to actively engage in parish affairs according to their respective roles and in a synodal manner. Presently, the dioceses of the Church in Taiwan are undergoing a gradual transformation process, striving to deepen their understanding and implementation of synodality in the Church's everyday life. This ongoing process requires continual adjustments and refinement.

3.2. Synodality in the formation of priesthood

- 3.2.1. In light of synodality and the documents issued by the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops, the formation team of the Taiwan Seminary has actively involving seminarians in discussions and resolutions regarding seminary affairs. In difference to the traditional approach where the formation team alone planned and organized activities, the current practice entails team work, inviting seminarians to take part in the discussions and in the implementation of the decisions, thus encouraging the seminarians to be

proactive and more aware of their co-responsibility and their missionary identity.

- 3.2.2. Clericalism needs be tackled by means of formation, in order to avoid the fact that clergy decides everything alone in the Church. The general practice of assigning the clergy to leadership positions in the Church, to whom the laypeople normally show respect, could generate clericalism. Lay individuals must recognize that the stewardship of the Church is a collective responsibility of all God's people, while clergy should put more trust in their lay counterparts and to share with them their church responsibility. Besides, in this regard, after his ordination, a young priest needs even more accompaniment and assistance in order to pull through the first few years.
- 3.2.3. This year, lay people are invited to take part in the planning of the annual ongoing formation of the clergy. It is envisaged that a lay person will be appointed in each diocese to be the secretary of the diocesan vocational promotion team, serving as a coordinator for the fostering of priestly vocations.

3.3. Women's participation and formation development in the Church

- 3.3.1. Many lay women are actively engaged in the affairs of local Church in Taiwan. However, more needs to be done in order to develop their innate characteristics and talents and to provide them well-structured formation possibilities that are specifically adapted to their physical, spiritual, and mental potentials.
- 3.3.2. The Church in Taiwan is home to the world's only Chinese-speaking Faculty of Theology, the Fu Jen

Faculty of Theology of St. Robert Bellarmine. The Faculty not only trains seminarians but also a significant number of sisters and lay faithful, particularly lay women. Therefore, time has come to encourage lay women to actively participate in the Church's evangelization mission and governance in accordance with their abilities and charisms, collaborating as a complementary role in the Church.

3.4. Enhancement of the charism and role of the laity

3.4.1. CRBC has set up a Commission for the Laity, the Family and Youth, serving as a platform for consultation and collaboration among lay associations. This commission plays a multifaceted role in fostering the formation of the lay faithful and encouraging their active participation in their formation. It facilitates a deeper understanding of the diverse vocations among the People of God, empowering each layperson to live out their Christian calling in various sectors of life including the family, workplace, Church, society, and professional circles. Moreover, it enables them to engage meaningfully in evangelization.

3.4.2. In order to equip the People of God with the necessary skills for evangelization, the local Church in Taiwan is actively promoting lay mission and pastoral evangelization training. It includes the formation of extraordinary Eucharistic ministers and altar servers, preparation for liturgical celebration, pre-marriage counseling, and animation of small community of faith, along with the training of diocesan volunteers, catechists, Bible study leaders, youth Bible groups animators, the training of indigenous apostolate

missionaries, and the study of the Council document 'Sacrosanctum Concilium'. After completing the training, the trainees will receive a mandate at a church ceremony which will take place in a liturgical celebration.

II. The Synodal Dimension of Particular Churches in Evangelization

1. Collaboration between the Dioceses and the sharing of spiritual grace-gifts

- 1.1. Each diocese in Taiwan engages in the dialogue and collaboration with communities of different beliefs. The double commission of CRBC, *Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenical Cooperation* and *Commission for Promotion of Christian Unity* of CRBC, aims to promote the exchange of spiritual grace-gifts with other religious communities and dominations across the country in collaboration with different dioceses, by means of interfaith dialogues, reciprocal visits, and cultural exchanges.
- 1.2. The local Church in Taiwan actively participates in the World Day of Prayer (in September of each year), an ecumenical initiative spearheaded by Christian women.

2. Enhancing the autonomy of the Bishops' Conference in conformity with universal ecclesial laws

- 2.1. According to the Code of Canon Law, totally there are 44 complementary norms that each bishop conference is allowed to establish for its region. In Taiwan, over 10 complementary norms have been established by CRBC, including the appointment of parish priests for a determined period of time and the alienation of church properties if the value exceeds 2 million USD, always with the approval of the Holy See. Among the norms that is possibly to be established and is in

discussion is the one for permanent diaconate which previously was considered as unnecessary but is currently being studied, or the role of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, and the ministry of permanent acolytes and lectors now extended to laywomen.

- 2.2. In case the local Church in Taiwan needs to establish any new complementary norm, it will first submit the draft to the Holy See for approval (*recognitio*), in order to be implemented and before it takes effect. As there is no any new particular church issue needs a canonical regulation, no complementary norm is necessary.

3. Fostering Wider Communion among the local Churches in Asia

As a member of the Federation of *Asian Bishops' Conferences* (FABC), CRBC collaborates with fellow members to promote the unity and collaboration in Asia. It actively engages in various ministries with other bishops' conferences on evangelization and on other areas, e.g. the Chinese translation of Church documents for all Chinese-speaking churches, and different kinds of social services. In June of this year, the *FABC Evangelization Office* will convene a regional gathering in Taiwan for East Asia. The objective is to gather insights and experiences to inform the evangelization efforts of churches in the Northeast Asia region, while also devising strategic plans for evangelization over the next decade.

III. The Missionary Dimension of the Synodal Church

1. Active and quick response of the local Church in Taiwan to the Holy See

1.1. Practical difficulties in promoting synodality

CRBC is striving to convey the communications and messages (e.g. regarding the Synod of Bishops) of the Holy See to the Catholic faithful in Taiwan in their native language. Nevertheless, the Holy See must also understand the difficulties of communication due to the cultural differences and the limitations of the local Church in Taiwan.

1.2. Difficulties of reception in spreading the communications of the Holy See

1.2.1. The Church in Taiwan does not have any professional or full-time translators at its disposal and often it must translate long documents of the Holy See within a very short period of time to meet the deadline, often delaying the dissemination and the reception of the messages.

1.2.2. The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith releases documents which at times trigger strong reactions in the local regions.

2. The role of Bishops in the Synod and the participation of the People of God in all stages of the synodal process

By the help of a national contact team of CRBC, the Church in Taiwan has been actively participating in ALL stages of the synodal process since the very beginning, by means of conferences, zoom-meetings, workshops, to study the *Work Documents* and *Synthesis Report* for each stage during the process which have always been made available both in digital and printed format. Following the Synod held last October, the Bishops of Taiwan have ensured that the latest news and documents regarding the Synod of Bishops must be disseminated, e.g. '*Letter to the People of God from the Synod*', at

the monthly recollection and in religious communities of their Dioceses, and encouraged the Catholic faithful to read the documents and to learn how to implement synodality in the local context.

IV. The Implementation of Synodality in the local Church

1. The fruitful correlation between liturgical celebration, sacramental life, and Church practices

- 1.1. Journeying with the Holy Spirit: on Pentecost, the nationwide team of the *Charismatic Renewal Movement* leads various groups from all the dioceses across the country in prayer and listening to the Holy Spirit. It is anticipated that through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Catholic faithful will be imbued with a sense of mission, desiring to commit themselves to evangelization.
- 1.2. Liturgical celebration serves as the primary and fundamental “place” for spiritual formation. The intrinsic beauty and simplicity of the Holy Mass are indispensable for the nurturing of the Catholic faith and spiritual growth. It is even more important than any training programs. Through church events, such as Eucharistic Congresses, processions, and adoration, believers are drawn closer to the foundation of the sacraments, while the events also represent opportunities of evangelization for non-Catholic believers.

2. The structure of spiritual conversation, the diverse spiritual traditions and cultural contexts of the Church in Taiwan

The Church in Taiwan is called to transform the spiritual experiences of different religious communities across the country into the dynamics of the local community, to experience more deeply how relationships with one another can be the platform of a genuine encounter with the Lord. The model of spiritual conversation will extend to diocesan and

parish assemblies and gatherings, aiming to cultivate a board consensus reflecting the fruit of synodality. Furthermore, the Dioceses will facilitate communion between clergy and laity to enrich pluralistic spiritual traditions and foster mutual exchange and dissemination of pastoral insights.

V. “Places” for a Synodal Church on Mission

1. The relation between inculturation and evangelization

- 1.1. The local Church in Taiwan keeps on exploring new platforms for evangelization that seamlessly integrate Christian principles with the local culture, notably by means of education, healthcare, and social services. These efforts not only raised outstanding believers in Taiwanese society but also garner goodwill and affinity towards the Church among the local population, especially through medical and social services for the people in remote areas, on the periphery of society. Today, it is imperative for church organizations to uphold this tradition and embrace the synodal style by forging partnerships with professionals from diverse sectors to address the new challenges of our times.
- 1.2. Taiwan is a society with different religions that co-exist peacefully with one another. Although the Catholics represent only a very small minority of the population, it upholds the teaching of Vatican II by actively fostering dialogue with other Christian denominations and communities of other beliefs. Almost all the dioceses have the opportunity to regularly take part in ecumenical meetings to promote Christian unity, to co-organize interfaith encounters to work for justice and peace with non-Catholics, being a visible testimony of human fraternity in the country.

2. Cultural Exchange among Different Ethnic Groups in the Church

2.1. Being a bridging between Church and the Neighborhood

Although the Catholics are less than 1% of Taiwan's population, they are spread widely across the island. Thanks to its well-developed structure, the Church in Taiwan effectively collaborates with local social welfare organizations and engages in various service initiatives launched by municipal authorities. By collaborating with the local welfare organizations and by integrating its know-how and resources in the services of the government, the Church in Taiwan finds its own way to embody synodality in the neighborhood.

2.2. Active presence of the Church among indigenous Catholics

Taiwan hosts numerous indigenous tribes, each of them has its own language, culture, and customs, making 2.5% of the total population. The Church in Taiwan is working proactively on the integration of Christian faith in indigenous cultures, including translating the Bible, organizing reading sessions and liturgical ceremonies in their native tongues. Such efforts facilitate meaningful dialogue and engagement between the message of Jesus Christ and the rich heritage of indigenous cultures. Furthermore, the Church extends its pastoral care to indigenous faithful who have migrated to urban areas for work.

3. The evangelization efforts of the Church in Taiwan in educational field

Each diocese and most religious congregations in Taiwan have their educational institutions spanning from kindergarten to primary school, secondary school, high school and college, so that the values of the Gospel and of Catholic education can permeate these Catholic educational institutions and become their culture in educational field.

4. The phenomenon of immigration and the pastoral evangelization work of the Church

4.1. The Dioceses in Taiwan are keenly attentive to the integration and acceptance of the various ethnic groups, including Han Chinese, new residents (i.e. foreigners who have become Taiwanese through naturalization), indigenous peoples, and migrant workers, ensuring their spiritual well-being and Christian life.

4.2. Specific pastoral and evangelization initiatives of CRBC for migrant workers

4.2.1. CRBC is a member of *International Christian Maritime Association* (IMCA) and cooperates with other Christian denominations in maritime humanitarian efforts to advocate for the welfare and rights of seafarers and fishermen.

4.2.2. *The Section for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (under the Commission for the Service of Integral Human Development of CRBC)* coordinates at a national level the pastoral care for migrant workers and foreign fishermen, providing them essential supplies and legal assistance.

4.3. Specific pastoral and evangelization initiatives of the Dioceses for new residents and migrant workers

The majority of the Dioceses in Taiwan have established committees or special units for migrant workers to carry out pastoral evangelization and social welfare services in accordance to their needs. Various religious congregations have also engaged in providing support and assistance to new residents and migrant workers.

5. The Church's social services for the disadvantaged

5.1. The Church in Taiwan embodied the love of Jesus Christ for the poor through its social services. Disadvantaged people,

upon receiving assistance, not only benefit from the support but also serve as testimonials to the love demonstrated by the Church, enriching the lives of those engaged in service.

- 5.2. Given the evolving environment and societal changes, along with the proliferation of all kinds of information on Internet, safeguarding women and children, particularly from the moral point of view, has become increasingly pressing. Consequently, all the dioceses in Taiwan have set up special groups for the prevention and management of sexual abuse, involving clergy and laypeople in training programs to address these new challenges, for the safeguard of minors.
- 5.3. CRBC has its *Commission for Health Care*, functioning as a platform for the professional development of spiritual care practitioners. Through personnel training initiatives, it has established a supportive community for spiritual care, extending from elderly day-care centers to local neighborhoods. This project extends care to the elderly who are not served by any center, with the support of a network of volunteers. These efforts deepen the Church's core mission of caring for the destitute population and serve as a frontline tool for evangelization.

VI. The impact of digital environment and technology on the local culture

In the era of digital youth, the challenge in priestly formation lies in the i-Generation and generation Z, who seek both independence in the digital world and acceptance in their real life. Presently, the *Taiwan Seminary* is broadening its approach to formation by incorporating sisters and inviting speakers beyond the Church membership. This diverse engagement aims to guide seminarians in navigating the complexities brought forth by the digital age through

thoughtful dialogue, with the intention of cultivating a more expansive worldview among them.

Translated and edited by

Fr. Otfried Chan

Secretary General

CRBC

Taipei, 13 May 2024

Report from the Diocese of Hong Kong on our Synodal Priorities

Here is the Report on the top three preferred Priorities of the **Diocese of Hong Kong**

Priorities included in the *Synthesis Report* from the First Assembly of the Synod of Bishops held in October 2023

Report prepared by: Bishop Joseph HA, OFM and Cardinal Stephen CHOW, S.J.

Report Date: 5 May 2024

Period of the sharing process on the priorities: January to April 2024

Seventeen councils/associations/groups taking part in the discernment process:

Diocese Curia

Council of Priests

Diocesan Pastoral Council

Association of the Major Superiors of Male Religious Institutes and Congregations

Association of the Major Superiors of Female Religious Institutes and Congregations

Migrant Workers

Principals of Diocesan Secondary Schools

Labor Commission

Marriage Issues Group

Eight Deaneries

Methodology:

1. The Diocese Curia has a discernment process to pick three proposed priorities from the three parts of the *Synthesis Report* that were deemed particularly relevant to the diocese.
2. The proposed priorities and the 20 priorities offered by the *Synthesis Report* and the "Possible Worksheet" of the FABC were sent to the participants before their respective sharing sessions. The proposed priorities were available to the groups in case they did not have time to consider the *Synthesis Report*

ahead of their discernment meetings.

3. The synodal method of “Conversation in the Spirit” was employed for sharing and discernment.
4. Each group chose 3 priorities from the 20 topics of the *Synthesis Report* (1 for each of the three parts of the *Synthesis Report*).
5. Taking into account of all the 16 focus groups, the top three choices for each part of the synthesis on the 20 priorities are listed here below with a further interpretation and some quoted remarks.

PART 1- THE FACE OF THE SYNODAL CHURCH

1. Synodality: Experience and Understanding (8 choices)

Synodality still needs to be deepened at different levels of the Diocese, since for many in the Diocese, including the clergy, religious and the laity, are foreign to Synodality as an idea, and also as a way of living in the Church.

Synodality asks for due respect to all the members of the community, treating each one as a channel that the Holy Spirit would manifest His will. Therefore, listening one another patiently, and attentively, and sharing with one another in full consciousness of the presence of the Holy Spirit are indispensable.

It requires not only intellectual understanding but also practice; not only practiced by a few, but ideally as many as possible because finally, being a synodal Church is a cultural change. Therefore, long-term formation and learning by experience are very much needed.

From the Association of the Major Superiors of Religious Institutes and Congregations: *“The participants explored proposals for implementing the synodal method of conversation in various meetings and assemblies within the Church. They noted that the culture of Synodality is gradually permeating the Church, emphasizing the importance of cultivating the skill of listening, which is integral to Synodality. Recognizing that listening is a challenging skill, they suggested the need to train individuals, including parish leaders, in the synodal method of conversation. They proposed starting this training with the formation of priests and religious, viewing Synodality as a skill that can be developed over time. Additionally, the participants stressed*

the importance of fostering openness among all members of the Church, creating an environment conducive to genuine dialogue and collaboration.”

PART 2- ALL DISCIPLES, ALL MISSIONARIES

9. Women in the Life and Mission of the Church (6 choices)

It is necessary to enhance the participation of women in the administration of the Church, especially in the decision-making process, and to consider how to better and more involve them in the implementation of Synodality.

Generally speaking, the participation of women in parochial activities, in various groups and even in the parish council is well above that of men. However, not many of them could take part in the pastoral team of the parish that holds real authority in terms of administration in the parish. There is a huge gap in-between the grass-root level and the “higher” level regarding the presence of women.

The participatory role and status of women should be promoted in the Church. They should be provided adequate opportunities and proper formation to serve in Catholic communities.

From the group of migrant workers: *“The Church recognizes and values the women’s contribution and gifts in pastoral leadership so that they could be actively involved in Church life and mission. Women find more meaning in life when their services are needed, especially in the Church. Despite their services at the Diocesan Pastoral Centre, still they would also like to respond to God’s call to go out and reach out to other migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees scattered around or with no community at all to support and guide them.”*

PART 3 – WEAVING BONDS, BUILDING COMMUNITIES

14. A Synodal Approach to Formation (6 choices)

Formation is important, especially for the new converts. Emphasis should be placed on listening and companionship. This is completely in line with the Diocese's pastoral orientation in recent years, i.e., formation for clergy, young people, and laity in general.

One of the objectives of formation is to cultivate the ownership of the Faithful, so that they could be more ready and willing to share the various ministries in the Church according to their capacity. Yet, we are aware that without the clergy's buy in and lay people's moving away from supporting clericalism, such ownership of the Faithful will not come to be in any significant manners.

From the North-West New Territories Deanery: *"There should be more caring, listening, accompaniment and formation in the Church."*

From the South-West New Territories Deanery: *"The formation that the Church offers should guide the Faithful and the Catechumen truly joining a faith community."*

Summary

As a summary, the Diocese of Hong Kong endorses the priority of promoting experience and understanding of synodality for the clergy, religious, and laity. Together with the increasing role of women in our Church in the management of the diocese, the Church will need to learn how best to respect and honor our sisters in their synodal role. In order to better assume these two priorities, proper formation of our clerics and religious, young people and laity for a synodal Church is simply a must.

Sincerely in the Risen Lord,

+ Stephen Cardinal Chow, S.J.

Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong

Catholic Diocese of Macau

Synod on Synodality

Further consultation on the diocesan level

The Diocesan Synodal Team convened on 17th February 2024 with the participation of representatives of various Catholic bodies and communities in the Macau. At the Bishop's behest, we all studied the synopsis of the letters and directives provided by the General Secretariat of the Synod. What follows are summaries of responses by a number of groups that focused on the two questions posed for reflection by the Synod organisers:

a) At the level of each local Church: HOW can we enhance the differentiated co responsibility in the mission of all the members of the People of God? What ways of relating, structures, processes of discernment and decision-making with regard to mission make it possible to recognise, shape, and promote co-responsibility? What ministries and participatory bodies can be renewed or introduced to better express this co-responsibility? Within the Synthesis Report, reference can be made more specifically to Chapters 8-12, 16 and 18.

b) At the level of relations between Churches, between groupings of Churches at different levels and with the Bishop of Rome: HOW can these relations be creatively articulated in order to find "a dynamic balance between the dimension of the Church as a whole and its local roots" (Synthesis Report chap. 5, lett. g)? Here reference can be made above all to Chapters 13, 19 and 20 of the Synthesis Report

Members present have also been encouraged to reflect on the best practice which they experienced or adopted during the ongoing synodal process.

One major religious community believes that the 2022 Diocesan Synthesis offers valuable reflections and suggestions for a more synodal Diocese. Their response emphasizes four areas: dialogue among clergy, lay, and religious communities; spiritual formation and empowerment of lay-leadership; interaction and learning among different ethnic and cultural communities; and interaction between the Catholic community and other groups in Macau society. The community suggests using the upcoming 450-year celebration of the Diocese to renew it under the Spirit's

guidance. They propose organizing spaces for further elaboration of these suggestions through sharing, discussion, and discerning. They emphasize deepening experiences, such as sharing a variety of experiences, skills, charisms, and ministries within the People of God. They suggest celebrating a Diocesan Synod every ten years, promoting synodality in basic learning and education, increasing interaction of different ethnic and cultural communities, and emboldening lay leadership in environmental care. They also propose expanding the experience of collegiality or synodality, including the use of spiritual conversation to discern and make decisions.

One female religious congregation emphasizes the importance of becoming a synodal church and outlines its priorities: listening, accompanying, and co-responsibly fulfilling the mission. Listening involves not only hearing others but also providing guidance through counseling, spiritual dialogue, and faith literature. For those still troubled after these services, referrals are made to various church and social organizations. Accompaniment is categorized into one-time, short-term, and long-term. One-time accompaniment involves introducing Macau Catholic culture to local and foreign visitors. Short-term accompaniment, usually over 6-12 months, helps individuals gradually recognize their needs through faith publications. Long-term accompaniment involves welcoming and serving transgender church members, accompanying non-church members who do not wish to continue with the “Catholic Doctrine” in the catechism class, and spiritual companionship. The expansion of synodal experiences and the co-responsible fulfillment of the mission includes long term volunteers who are usually retirees wishing to spend their time meaningfully, the assistance of the broader religious family, and cooperation with diocesan institutions.

Another religious female community discusses the role of women in the Church, suggesting that both consecrated and lay women could have more participatory roles, which could address issues like power abuse and enrich the Church. However, it questions the necessity of women being part of the diaconate,

suggesting that women can serve the Church and society as lay women, utilizing their unique capacities and talents. It also emphasizes the need for religious vocations and the role of women in religious life. Their reflection suggests addressing clericalism through education and promoting awareness of religious vocation. It also highlights the importance of educating children about sex to protect themselves. In practical terms, it discusses the roles of women in the Church, such as being lectors in Mass, and emphasizes the importance of family care. It suggests that women with theological or philosophical education can help in the formation and teaching of seminarians. It also discusses the value of domestic work and the importance of teaching girls home skills and virtues.

The Diocese Education Committee collected opinions on two issues. Firstly, on deepening the church's synodality, it was suggested that all disciples should be missionaries as Jesus hoped. They should form communities for synodality, not cliques, with cooperation and inclusivity. Leaders should listen openly and wisely. The Diocese should encourage all parish groups to provide an equal and open environment, encouraging members to express their opinions and participate in discussions and decision-making processes. Secondly, on expanding the church's synodality, the committee noted that in Macau, most of the people living in poverty and on the margins of society are new immigrants and foreign workers. They often feel lonely and helpless, and faith is particularly important to them in unstable living conditions. It was suggested that care groups should be established to focus on the needs of these marginalized people. The groups can regularly communicate with the marginalized, provide support, friendship, and resources. They can become the support network for the marginalized in the church, understand their personal or family needs and backgrounds, establish sincere relationships with them under the respect of their privacy, and lead them to participate in church activities or further participate in catechumen classes.

The Diocesan Commission for Catechetical Formation proposes strengthening and deepening the formation of the laity in Bible study, understanding of faith, and awareness of the

liturgy. This formation should be lifelong and extend to different levels and situations of the laity. The proposal also highlights the distinct roles and gifts of the clergy and the laity in the Church, and the need for cooperation and division of duties in pastoral planning and evangelization strategies. The proposal advocates for an “outreach-oriented Church” that proactively reaches out to those who have not yet been part of the process, particularly those living in poverty and marginalized conditions. The Church should also pay attention to organizations such as Caritas or the Good Shepherd Sisters, listening to their service experiences regularly and supporting them.

The Diocese Life Commission works in line with Pope Francis’s call to care for societal quality of life, environmental protection, medical ethics, and culture of respect for the human body. The Commission’s Medical Technology Ethics Group held a series of “Life Protection Activities” and launched the “Love at the Beginning of Man” school tour exhibition. The MTEG established the “Macau Catholic Health Service Personnel Association” (MCHSPA) which aims to promote professional exchanges between Catholic health service personnel in Macau and around the world, study and discuss life ethics issues, and establish diversified service items, including medical services, to respect and protect life.

The Focolare Movement in Macau has formed a Core Group to integrate the spirit of synodality, with Jesus as the core and teacher. The group includes members from different branches, volunteers, family representatives, youth, and focolarine. A survey conducted in June 2023 helped understand the needs of the new generations and strategize their work. The Synod aims to expand experiences of synodality, promoting initiatives to grow as a synodal church on a mission, involving those untouched by the process so far, including marginalized groups and people of other religions. The Focolare Movement collaborated with the preparation of the Ecumenical Prayer Meeting, inviting members to share their experiences of loving God and the neighbor. They also shared good practices such as sharing concrete experiences

based on the Gospel, seeking help in times of need, and consulting others in decision-making.

One pious association offered their reflections on ‘deepening’ the differentiated co-responsibility of all God’s people in the missionary mission, calling for further consultation by local churches, involving parish priests, participating groups, and synodal teams expressing various experiences, skills, graces, duties, and personal and group perspectives. Neophytes and catechumens may lack regular or self-disciplined faith cultivation. For faith to take root, it is suggested to hold long-term catechesis classes for new church members to strengthen their faith foundation and shoulder the mission of evangelization in the future. Their second reflection discusses ‘expanding’ the experience of synodality: continuing or promoting new initiatives to become a synodal church of the mission. Through training and listening experiences, those who have not yet been touched by the process, those living in poverty and on the margins of society, as well as Christians of different denominations and people of other religions are also to be involved, and collect and share testimonies and transmit best practice models. The public’s life is inseparable from mobile apps. The diocese and parishes can set up a dedicated mobile app “Macau Diocese One-Stop” based on existing website and social media information. Through the push messages of the app, it can more effectively push/update the courses, news, and information of different institutions and societies of the church, becoming a publicity point for church activities.

Another pious association has been using “Spiritual Conversations” for group meetings since 2018, enhancing both group and individual spiritual growth. These conversations are deep dialogues aimed at building spiritual bridges between people, helping faith groups perceive and experience God’s presence. The key point is the belief that God actively participates in our lives and His divinity can be discovered within each of us. Preparation is needed for these conversations, including understanding the topic to be discussed and opening our hearts through prayer and reflection. Participants need to be willing to share their experiences and feelings sincerely, and have a humble

and open attitude to listen actively to God's Holy Spirit speaking through others. "Spiritual Conversations" are not just dialogues, but a way to reshape our relationship with God, allowing us to understand more deeply how He operates in our lives. Group members assist in guiding participants to conduct "Spiritual Conversations" during Jesuit school activities or other faith gatherings. The group will continue to use "Spiritual Conversations" for meetings and is willing to promote it to other parish groups, hoping that different groups can benefit from this method.

The Catholic Family Association reflects on its synodal work of support for married couples and families in Macau. In response to societal disregard for marriage and family and the economic downturn in Macau due to the pandemic, the association has launched grief counseling training courses. The association believes in the importance of prevention and puts effort into community-level prevention. It intervenes in services with shared responsibility, conducting parenting lectures and nurturing groups for couples. The association has established four development groups, allowing members of the committee, frontline staff, and volunteers to participate together. The association listens to and absorbs the needs of families or service users, collecting opinions through various surveys. The results of the 2021 survey showed that the stages of adolescence and empty nest are most in need of attention. The association provides counseling services for individuals, couples, and families to respond to their needs in different matters such as parenting education, marital relations, emotional stress, and bereavement experiences.

The Diocese of Macau, in preparation for the 450th anniversary of its founding in 2026, is actively engaging in a Synod on Synodality. Various Catholic bodies and communities in Macau are participating, focusing on enhancing co-responsibility in the mission of all members of the People of God and creatively articulating relations between different sectors of society. The Diocese is exploring ways to deepen and expand experiences of

synodality, involving those untouched by the process so far, including marginalized groups and people of other religions.

As the Diocese moves towards its 450th anniversary, it aspires to become a more synodal church, deepening its relationship with God, and understanding more deeply how He operates in our lives. The Diocese hopes to celebrate this milestone by renewing itself under the Spirit's guidance, promoting synodality in basic learning and education, increasing interaction of different ethnic and cultural communities, and emboldening lay leadership in environmental care. The aspiration is for the Catholic Diocese of Macau to continue to grow and deepen its faith, serving as a beacon of God's love and grace for all, no less in the spirit of evangelizing pioneers such as St Francis Xavier, Matteo Ricci, and many more dedicated missionaries and laity of the last century who laid the foundation of the Church's educational and charitable apostolates firmly in modern Macau society.

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Prefecture Apostolic of Ulaanbaatar - Mongolia, compiled by the FABC Central Secretariat, September 2022

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