

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 FOUR

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Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines

SALYA

Crossing-over to a Synodal Church: The Philippine Report

We are indeed in the Synod as the local churches pursued with enthusiasm its journey into synodal renewal. In January, during the bishops' annual meeting, where Cardinal Mario Grech was a special guest speaker, the GSSB's invitation to participate in the continuing synodal dialogue was announced. The National Synod Team designed two sessions, entitled Salok and Salya, to put into a prayerful reflection the 10-point consultation GSSB guideline. Salok (the act of fetching water) reflects on John 4, the Samaritan Woman at the Well; Salya (to cross-over, the popular forward movement of the devotees of Jesus Nazareno) takes three Gospel texts where Jesus is crossing over from one place to the next (to a place of communion, a place of healing, a place of mission). Since the Lenten Season was coming, Salok and Salya were facilitated as Lenten recollection exercises.

Journey into Easter

Eighty four percent of the dioceses (72 out of 86) facilitated the second round of synodal consultations. The bishops spearheaded the initial meetings of the Diocesan Synod Teams. The Diocesan Synod Teams in turn called on the Parish Synod Team members and started studying the GSSB 10-point Guideline, the whole Synthesis Report and the session flow of the Salok and Salya Reflection Guides. Aside from planning and training facilitators and notetakers, there was an additional training for those who will facilitate the Conversation in the Spirit, used as the main method of prayerful sharing and reflection in all the sessions.

Most of the dioceses chose specific chapters from the Synthesis Report that are relevant for their own discipleship journeys - some choosing 3 chapters; others more than 5 chapters. The most chosen chapters were: Chapter 8 - Church is Mission (31 dioceses); Chapter 18 - Structures of Participation (29 dioceses); Chapter - the Poor as Protagonists in (23 dioceses); Chapter 16 - a Listening and Accompanying Church (19 dioceses) and Chapter 17 - Digital Missionaries (14 dioceses). One diocese in the South reflected on

all the 20 chapters of the Synthesis Report! The dioceses who dialogued with the different themes/chapters of the Synthesis Report followed the Convergences-Matters for Consideration-Proposals' flow of reporting. Moreover, about a dozen dioceses used the GSSB 10-point guideline and came up with a thematic report of their reflections.

Local Church Alive with the Synodal Spirit

Reflection sessions Salok and Salya were facilitated at the parish and diocesan levels, most of them – although not exclusively – inviting the participants of the first consultation in 2021. It was also commendable that the parish and diocesan teams made efforts to reach out to the different sectors they consulted last 2021, again not exclusively – reaching out to the poor members of the community, farmers, fisherfolks, daily wage earners, PWDs, PDLs, children and youth, LGBTQ+, families of OFW (Overseas Filipino Workers), senior citizens, business people, local government, to mention some. Most dioceses reported reaching hundreds of people, with some reaching thousands (Dioc of Novaliches 1,200 people, Dioc of San Carlos 5,200 people), with reflection sessions running from 4 to 8 hours. Salok and Salya sessions used small group and plenary dynamics, the conversation in the spirit for deeper reflection and internalizing rituals coming from the Bible texts of Salok and Salya. Most of the dioceses translated into their local languages the concepts of Salok and Salya, as well as the main points of the Synthesis Report, their extra efforts manifesting a growing ownership of the synodal renewal process.

It was interesting to note that the dioceses integrated this second round of synodal consultation sessions (Oct 2021 being the first round) into their own diocesan local church development. A lot of dioceses used the reflection sessions in line with their diocesan synodal pastoral planning, dialoguing with their own pastoral priorities and pathways. Other dioceses went back to the results of the 2021 consultation and continued on the themes and priorities they had set back then. A few dioceses are having their Diocesan Pastoral Assemblies and made the consultations an important part of their communal gathering for direction-setting. One used this consultation session also as an opportunity for the “Promulgation

of the Acts and Decrees of the 2nd Synod” of their diocese. One will be having its first diocesan Synod come 2026 and the results of the two consultations (2021 and 2024) will be the ground and base of their decision-making and action planning.

Listening to Other Voices

The National Synod Team also coordinated a more in-depth reflection on the controversial issues or open questions mentioned in Chapter 15 – sexual identity, couples in irregular unions, end of life, Artificial Intelligence, and its ethical responsibility. The topic on women deacons was also included. The National Synodal Team chose experts from different parts of the country – theologians, social scientists, practitioners, and people living in such situations - to discern on a particular topic through online and face to face reflection days. The National Synodal Team made sure that the participants for these challenging reflections would be coming from different voices – those who support, those who oppose and those with a critical stance. It was edifying how they respected each other’s stories and experiences and came up with a reflection paper (attached). Around ten dioceses also reflected on these controversial issues. The National Synodal Team also called on the National Synodal Council composed of clergy, religious and lay sectoral representatives at the Bishops’ Conference level to enjoin them to facilitate reflections organized during the synodal consultations in 2021 to ensure representation from different national church bodies. There were also separate sessions at a national level for the youth and some lay associations, as well as from Indigenous Peoples, facilitated by the coordinators at the Bishops’ Conference level.

In writing this report, the National Team went through cycles of reflection: first, grouping the dioceses into larger metropolitan divisions to have a regional perspective on local synodal renewal processes. Secondly, the diocesan reflections were separated per chapter of the Synodal Report to see a national picture of the important principles of synodal living that need to be emphasized. After several reading and reflecting sessions, themes were allowed to emerge.

This report has two parts. **Salok: Drinking from the Wells of our Synodal Experiences.** The first part reflects on the noteworthy experiences of synodality in our local churches. It was edifying to realize that local churches already have some programs and structures that follow the synodal principles. Moreover, some specific areas of synodal lifestyle were introduced and strengthened. Having said that, there remains some areas that are challenging and would require renewal of minds and hearts, programs and structures. **Salya: Crossing over to a Deeper Praxis of a Synodal Church.** Realizing the strengths and weaknesses of our local churches, and noting the need for very important shifts in cultures and structures, this second part explores the different proposals and pathways to cross over to a more authentic living out of a Synodal Church in mission.

SALOK: DRINKING FROM THE WELLS OF OUR SYNODAL EXPERIENCES

Like the Samaritan woman who drank from the well of her encounter with Jesus, the living water, dioceses share their transforming encounters and spirit-filled mission which are seeds of synodality giving new life.

CONVERGENCES

Though synodality in its “newness” remains vague, confusing, and attracting cynicism among some members, those who have been engaged in the processes and have been allowed to speak out, speak up, and listen, have grown to embrace the richness of its vision. To some, ‘synodal and synodality’ has become an overused adjective implying that it is already part of people’s consciousness. But it may also lose its meaning if it is taken out of context. One participant jokingly told the group: *“Let’s have a synodal break, eat our synodal lunch, have a synodal siesta, and then come back for a synodal picture taking.”*

Though many hold different levels of understanding regarding synodality, many are open to seeing what needs to be renewed and changed from the structures, and processes, to our ways of relating and living together. Many dioceses integrated Filipino synodal

values and used cultural expressions, practices, and traditions in their synodal framework and processes.

“Maraming nagbabalik-bayan; umuuwi sa tahanan.” (There are many homecomings taking place; people returning home). Some dioceses report that the enthusiastic spirit brought about by the synodal process has increased people’s participation in church programs and activities. Some are “returning home” to the parish experiencing, “a new sense of hope, healing, reconciliation, and restoration of trust.”

“Malayo na, pero malayo pa.. Marami na, pero marami pa...” (We have come a long way, but it is still a long way to go...There are many of us, but there are many more out there). Though many good things have emerged from the processes, many agree that much still needs to happen. The synodal process awakened all to the realization that though there are many Catholics who are engaged, many more are out there waiting and wandering, seeking an encounter with the divine amid their daily questions and challenges.

BEC as a locus of synodality. Many dioceses mentioned the resurgence of BECs as an avenue to deepen the faith and to experience and live synodality. It is the space where sharing and caring are most felt and where the Christian faith is lived through mission. Dioceses also acknowledge the potential of BECs in reaching out to the “others” and reintegrating them into the church. BECs serving the Basic human communities (BHC) reflect the holistic approach to the church’s mission, emphasizing the integral well-being of individuals and communities.

Focus on the marginalized. Synodality challenges the Church’s understanding of poverty and the need to listen ever more to people living in poverty. As one archbishop mentioned, “, *“When you go to your new parish assignment, you spend the first three months locating the poor. Bring your parish leaders with you, go to the poor, get to know their names, be cognizant of their situation and needs, and when you make your pastoral plans, keep them in your mind and heart”*. In some dioceses, the first consultations gave birth to new initiatives and programs of reaching out to the poor indicating a listening to the real needs and connection to realities on the ground.

Transformed by “reading the signs of the time,” dioceses have renewed their understanding of living with and for the poor through an inclusive mindset and through living out the cultural values of *kapwa* and *Bayanihan*. Creative initiatives for the economically poor (*Kindness Stations, Unboxing Happiness, Housing for the Poor*) as well as those who are mentally and physically challenged (*Radio Catechism, Catechism for the deaf and mute*) are successfully implemented through the collaboration of different entities. Through a determined step to listen and walk with them, the church is also led to face multi-faceted poverty from which their cries are rooted; “poverty of morals, poverty of communion, and poverty of spirituality towards mission” that needs renewal and transformation of all from within.

Learning and embracing cultures. Dialogue of life and faith among people of other faiths, and ethnicities transforms our understanding of synodality. It is also through such spaces that synodal values in action are imparted. For instance, indigenous people’s communal resource sharing, dispute resolution through consensus, and the central roles of elders and leaders in guiding the community may inform ecclesial practices.

Co-Responsibility in Mission. Synodality has inspired an expanded and dynamic understanding of mission. From being a mission local church to becoming a missionary local church, “walking together” in a true synodal church indicates the reality of a “co-responsibility” of laity and clergy which means that pastors and lay people, without superiority of one over the other, carry together the life and mission of the Church. Various innovative initiatives in missioning to the poor in one diocese not only respond to the needs of the poor but also facilitate connection with the poor and the sharing of Good News in a very creative way. There are new ways of doing mission like the use of the online space to provide ongoing catechesis and reaching out to those in the peripheries. The care for the common home in response to the call of Holy Father through *Laudato Si* strengthened collaboration with local government. It also helped them realize that though the mission place needs missionary priests, all of the baptized are natural missionaries.

Women as heart and feet. A synodal church is a feminine church: loving, caring, compassionate, kind, and forgiving. Comprising the biggest number of church workers and volunteers, women play various roles in the life and mission of the church. There are more women than men who go out for missionary work like catechism and hold leadership positions in various participatory bodies and organizations. Many dioceses acknowledge their importance in the church and their crucial role in decision-making. Likewise, they recognize the need for women to be empowered through education to engage in evangelization, catechesis, and other ministries confidently and authoritatively. However, some dioceses do not consider diaconal ministry for them but stress their contribution to priestly formation.

Synodality as Charism - Consecrated Life and Lay Associations. As the synodal processes affirmed the synodal lifestyle of many religious communities and lay associations, it has also challenged them towards a more determined and intentional walking with the local church. From routine or ritualistic practices, synodality calls them towards a more vibrant and God-centered lifestyle that is inclusive and relational, and attentive to the signs of the times. With this comes the necessity for ongoing spiritual and professional development as well as ‘updating’ on current issues such as ecology and ecumenism.

Priests as a key mover of synodality. While the laity still reserves high regard for priests, many find it important for the priestly formation to undergo a thorough review given the synodal vision. Many express how the priests need to be more relational and immersed, open and accommodating. But they also wish that bishops would prioritize open communication with their priests, to understand their unvoiced needs as well as foster a culture of care and support for them to continually carry out their ministry effectively.

Formation towards Synodality as a lifestyle. All dioceses recognize the value of a synodal approach to formation that enables all ordained and lay to cultivate synodality as a lifestyle – personally and communally. A synodal community is rooted in the Word of God which is celebrated in the liturgies and shared in

families, BECs, and ministries. A synodal community is also formed towards a consciousness of one's kapwa – upholding their honor and dignity as people of God and their capacity to dream and share the vision of the Church. Many dioceses see the significance of strengthening the place of the family as a “pillar of mission” believing that synodality is best caught and taught in the family. Aside from accompanying parents and children in creating their homes as havens of synodality, there is a need to intensify home visitation that offers spiritual support, counseling, and practical assistance as needed.

Ecclesial Discernment and Open Questions. Dioceses recognize the challenge to uphold love and truth in the hot-button issues mentioned. Among the issues mentioned, many can relate to complicated marital situations as well as issues regarding identity and sexuality. Conversation in the spirit has been much appreciated as a method for collective discernment.

Listening and Accompanying. A synodal church is a listening and accompanying church. It signifies a shift towards a more compassionate, open, and understanding approach to ministry. By emphasizing the importance of listening attentively and accompanying others on their spiritual and life journeys, the dioceses seek to cultivate a culture of empathy, solidarity, and mutual respect within the faith community. Some Catholic lay associations, believing that listening is the core value of synodality, assessed their listening practices in prayer, in community life, and their various apostolates. By doing so, they realize areas where they need to improve. This encourages a deeper connection with individuals, fostering authentic relationships and creating spaces for healing, growth, and understanding.

While adequate formation complementary towards listening and accompaniment is needed, an “increasing recognition” within the Church of the realities and “diverse range of human experiences” can create more affective and effective programs considerate of all. There is a need to let go of traditional categories that look at membership in church organizations as a criterion for one's Catholicity.

Borderless Church in the Digital Environment. There is a recognition of the digital space as a distinct area of mission. It is a “borderless church,” that provides “wide reach pastoral care. In the pandemic, it opened new pathways to celebrate liturgy and receive faith formation. Social media helped spread the Good news as well as protect people (Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children). Many however feel that rapid digitization adversely impacts senior church members, impoverished active leaders, and rural pastoral volunteers and confusion regarding virtual celebrations of the Sacraments needs to be addressed.

Cultures and Structures of Participation. Participatory bodies (Parish Pastoral Council, Parish Finance Council, and WESTOY-V) and BECs that engage the “most common and ordinary lay faithful,” enable participation and develop lay leadership. However, the synodal process manifests the need for these bodies for monitoring and evaluation. Cultural values can be integrated into these structures like the concept of “one for all, all for one” which reflects a deep sense of communal solidarity and interconnectedness.

Dioceses carrying out their diocesan pastoral planning in line with the synodal process indicate this desire to involve all in discernment and decision-making. Likewise, formation programs, celebrations, and ministry activities in many dioceses encourage greater participation and collaboration among groups and entities. The Eucharist is seen as the greatest manifestation and model of participation and co-responsibility. Thus, a culture of participation begins through “a policy of wider participation in the liturgy.” and the involvement of sectors like LGBTQ, PWDs, and those in the existential peripheries.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

In the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, Jesus did not only enter into an unfamiliar territory, but he also wanted to reach out to someone who was outside the existential periphery. In their conversation, Jesus invited the Samaritan woman to engage into a discernment process by listening to each other’s opinion without judging each other. The following are the conversations among the different dioceses regarding some

concerns and challenges that require further reflection, consultation and communal discernment.

The Church's structure, programs, and mission at various levels should take the poor, marginalized, and oppressed as its utmost priority. The poor are generally more generous than the well-to-do for the ministries of the Church. There is a need to address the passivity and indifference of the poor and the need for their active involvement in the life of the Church. Participants underscored the importance of providing specific programs and initiatives tailored to these communities' needs and ensuring their voices were heard and valued within the church.

The collective decision of the People of God arrived at through consultation takes priority over the decision and authority of the council leader, and priest/bishop. Church goods is owned by the faith community; hence the use of the temporal goods requires the collective concurrence of the community.

There is a need to discern how to balance prophetic condemnation of injustice and diplomatic efforts to influence policy makers for the common good. On the one hand, need to explore in depth the meaning, the practices of synodality; also confront fears that S would change the teachings of the church, etc.

One of the primary problems in evangelizing online is the sheer volume of information and voices competing for attention. The internet is a vast marketplace of ideas, beliefs, and opinions, and amidst this cacophony, it can be challenging for religious messages to stand out. Moreover, individuals are bombarded with so much content that it can be difficult for them to discern what is authentic and meaningful.

The contrasting view that women deacon is counter-cultural and pastorally delicate and the realization that the Holy Spirit is leading the Church to enhance the responsibilities of the women in the Church such as catechesis, leading a Sunday worship in the absence of a priest, and taking into consideration the women to be Extra Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Ordination of women to the permanent diaconate will allow women to share in the governing (Canon 129), teaching, and sanctifying roles in the

Church. The ordination of women as permanent deacons carries the risk of further reinforcing a hierarchical clerical church. Measures should be taken to prevent this. On the one hand, the ordination of women to the permanent diaconate can be used as a way of specifying the limits of the service of women in the church. On the other hand, it can be a way to open up a path to women's priesthood.

The norms, laws, values, and principles of the Church might be devalued because of an affirming and accommodating attitude of the Church towards couples in diverse situations. With this, there is a need to study further how to balance the people's concrete situations and the Church's teachings. We must remember though that we do not "sit in the chair of Moses and judge, sometimes with superiority and superficiality, difficult cases and wounded families." To be "true defenders of doctrine, we "not uphold its letter, but its Spirit; not ideas, but people; not formulas, but the free availability of God's love and forgiveness" (Pope Francis, Address on the Conclusion of the Synod of Bishops on the Family, 2015).

Caring for vulnerable populations is the most important ethical aspect in the development and deployment of AI technologies. Among them are the poor, children, women, indigenous groups, migrants, and persons with disabilities. The ethical principles and values of the Church should guide AI initiatives to ensure that they prioritize the common good and promote human dignity, particularly for marginalized and disadvantaged groups. It remains crucial that these AI realities be examined through the lens of our shared values and Church teachings. Most important, AI should not replace the person in any context and the person-to-person as an authentic mode of social relation.

Queer stories have the potential in expanding the Church's understanding of the human condition. Several queer members who work in theology asserted the value of reorienting our language around "belonging" for LGBTQI+ Catholics. Rather than merely being grateful for institutional acceptance – or worse, the "tolerance" of baklang Katoliko – queer folks must claim their space and dignity as full human beings and baptized in Christ. If the Church seeks to be conversant with the world's concerns, it

must engage LGBTQI+ Catholics. To the extent that Filipino culture is very much influenced by Christianity – in this instance Roman Catholic worldviews and beliefs, religious phenomena remains a salient point of consideration for young people – queer or straight – who seek to live meaningful lives.

It is a painful experience that the Church has consistently neglected the voices of the Indigenous Peoples, and even silenced their voices in the synodal report. IPs understand the Church but the Church does not understand us. Indigenization is the recognition of the tribal rites and rituals as authentic expressions of the Catholic faith in the indigenous communities. The appreciation and use of indigenous music, art, and symbols in the sacraments and devotions merely superficial inculturation. The Church should serve as the companion of the Indigenous Peoples in the preservation of its cultures, restoration of its self-determination through respect and protection of their ancestral domain. This is also the process of healing the wounds of division and cultural alienation brought about by a colonial missionary approach.

Suffering and death are inherent realities of human existence and some people have difficulties in grasping their meaning and purpose. In these situations, the Church finds herself sometimes in the complex and intricate relation of listening to the diverse experiences of doubts and fears, sorrows and pains, joys and hopes vis-à-vis its moral and theological teachings. It is important that in this complexity, the sanctity of human life and the compassionate support to all those in need defines our Christian response.

Collaboration and co-responsibility between religious congregation and the local church can only grow as far as both are open to listening and dialogue. As much as the local church vision should provide spaces for charisms to grow, religious communities can also reinterpret their charisms in the context of the changing times. While many recognize the contribution of religious communities and lay associations in witnessing a Church of the Poor, some point out inconsistencies in lifestyle and attitudes towards the poor.

Salya: Crossing over to a Deeper Praxis of a Synodal Church

Our devotees to the Black Nazarene would shout “*Salya!*” when they are ready to move in unison during the procession. Just like Jesus, who crossed over to give food to the multitude, to challenge Peter and the disciples to ‘have faith’, and to bring healing to the sick, we commit to carry on with our synodal journey through these various proposals:

FORMATION OF A SYNODAL HEART

1. Rootedness in the Word of God and Communal discernment.

A synodal church is founded in hearts converted through the Word of God. Bible sharing and communal prayer should be part of every group and ministry life. By doing so, one learns to listen and to dialogue as well as listen to the spirit alive in each one. Communal discernment through methods such as the conversation in the spirit ought to be a staple practice for the local church.

2. Discipleship and Leadership Development. Prioritize the spiritual growth and leadership development of our faithful. This involves teaching them to view their everyday lives as opportunities for mission and equipping them with the skills to share their faith and serve others. Investing in regular training, mentoring, and leadership opportunities ensures a sustainable and adaptable mission, empowering the faithful to take active roles in the Church's mission efforts.

3. Critiquing Formation. There is a need to take a more critical review of regular formation programs, especially for the children and youth, for the families and BECs looking deeply into the reasons such groups fall into passivity and stagnancy. In synodal spirit, engage the stakeholders themselves instead of just allowing the priests and catechists or theologians to design and manage formation. An interdisciplinary perspective (psychological, sociological, spiritual) needs to be applied in analyzing to have more realistic and effective interventions.

4. Synodal Approach in all Formation. Designing catechesis for authentic understanding and living of synodality is very much needed for ongoing clergy as well as bishops’ formation, renewal

of seminary formation, formation for lay leadership, and the permanent diaconate.

CHURCH IN MISSION

1. Holistic and Contextual Mission. To integrate evangelization with social action, addressing social injustices, poverty, and environmental issues alongside preaching the gospel. Adapting mission strategies based on the cultural and social contexts of the communities it serves ensures that the gospel is relevant and accessible, fostering meaningful relationships and effectively communicating its message, especially to the poor and the marginalized in the existential peripheries.

2. Community Partnerships and Engagement. To actively seek partnerships with local organizations like LGUs, businesses, and government agencies to enhance its mission efforts. These collaborations can provide additional resources and expertise, enabling the Church to serve the faithful more effectively through development projects, educational programs, and healthcare initiatives. Engaging with the wider community through these partnerships makes the Church's mission more inclusive and impactful.

3. Youth as Heralds of Synodality. The presence of youth power was evident in the synodal consultations. The youth claims this is their era hence a need for the Church to empower them, enabling them as heralds of synodality especially evangelization. Aside from encouraging their involvement in the ministries of the Church, special concern should be given to developing their leadership. Promoting synodality in schools and other educational settings can help integrate young people into the broader mission of the Church. Training programs for youth in Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) should be established to build their leadership skills and deepen their involvement in church activities.

4. Women in Leadership. Advocate for the greater inclusion of women in leadership roles and decision-making bodies within the Church. Ensure that women's voices are heard and valued in pastoral planning, governance, and ministry, overcoming cultural resistance and structural barriers which is essential to promote

gender inclusivity and elevate the status of women both within the Church and in society.

Support ongoing theological and pastoral research on the possibility of opening the diaconate to women. Encourage dialogue and consultation among theologians, pastoral leaders, and the faithful to deepen understanding and discern the next steps. This continued research and discernment will help in making informed decisions about women's roles in ecclesial ministries. The service of women who are already effectively engaged in parish ministries can be further strengthened and magnified by the formal recognition of their leadership by the Church through their inclusion into the permanent diaconate in the future.

5. Digital Evangelization and Community Building. The Church is now in the digital age hence should actively engage in online digital evangelization to reach a broader audience, particularly involving digital natives, digital migrants, and digital tourists. This includes creating conscious, systematic, and participative content and offering digital opportunities, including priests, to use modern technology effectively. The Church should also focus on building online communities and continuing spiritual and pastoral activities in the digital space, ensuring that both outreach and internal operations are enhanced through technological proficiency.

STRUCTURES FOR PARTICIPATION

1. BECs and FAMILY. Families are acknowledged as the first venue for synodal formation where all learn to accept, to listen, to serve. It is also everyone's first training on how to relate to others, especially to the poor and marginalized. Building up families in catechesis and service and journeying with other families in their neighborhood provides a strong foundation for a Synodal Church. Strengthening the BECs, a community of families in a neighborhood, as the most effective synodal pathways has been mentioned time and again in all the diocesan reports.

2. Empowerment and Involvement of Laity and Clergy. There is a pressing need to implement the CBCP program for permanent

deacons to address and enhance the pastoral activities not well attended by parishes to due to a limited number of priests. There is a strong voice for the involvement of former clergy and destigmatize priests who have left the ministry and want to go back as members of the worshipping community by exploring possibilities for reintegrating them into pastoral roles within the Church. Conduct thorough assessments and provide appropriate support and training to facilitate their re-entry into the ministry appropriate to their current canonical status.

3. Establishment and Strengthening of Councils and Committees. More active participation of the laity in decision-making processes within the diocese through the Diocesan Council of the Laity, and advocating for their needs, and promoting their involvement in the church's life and mission in the parish through the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC). Strengthen and align the structures and statutes of PPC and BECs to foster a better synodal spirit, ensuring effective communication and coordination from the Diocese to the BECs. Implement comprehensive formation programs and regular assemblies for lay leaders, and create better links between BEC units, the parish council, and the parish priest.

4. Professionalizing ministry. Professionalize the pastoral services in parishes, by equipping Church volunteers with pastoral skills and providing appropriate compensation, especially for musicians, choir members, and other volunteers. Implement systems for recognizing and compensating individuals who contribute to the liturgical and pastoral life of the Church. This will help ensure the sustainability and professionalism of church ministries.

5. Principles and Practices for Effective Governance. Emphasize the foundational principles of Catholic social teaching in Church governance and ministry. Support marginalized groups, inform decision-making with subsidiarity, encourage participation at all levels, and prioritize transparency in financial and administrative matters. Implementing systems and measures to ensure transparency and accountability in all aspects of Church governance and resource management is crucial. This includes conducting regular audits, maintaining clear communication, and

fostering trust-building relationships especially between the bishop and priests, the priests among themselves, and the priests and parishioners.

6. Formation and Accountability Systems. There is a need to conduct servant leadership formation programs for our priests and lay leaders and strengthen transparency and accountability of parish resources using current technologies. Establish regular audits and evaluations of clergy performance, and ensure systems for monitoring and aligning pastoral plans and programs are in place.

7. Community Empowerment Programs. Create initiatives aimed at empowering the neglected sectors of the parish communities, especially members of the LGBTQ+, irregular couples, and other parishioners “outside the aquarium” to address their own needs and challenges, harnessing their giftedness and providing them an atmosphere of a welcoming Church where they are appreciated as individuals away from the stigma of the society.

THE CHURCH OF THE POOR

Our dioceses and parishes through their social and pastoral programs have been reaching out to the poor and marginalized sectors, providing the necessary support and advocacy to address their unique needs and challenges. Through these community empowerment programs, the Church is able to help local communities develop their solutions, focusing on capacity-building and skills development. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and agency among the faithful, enabling them to take charge of their lives. Collaborating with local government units (LGUs) and other organizations for community projects further amplifies this support, ensuring that the Church maintains its prophetic role in advocating for justice and support for the least, the last, and the lost.

Service to the poor is not just giving them material food but also the spiritual food for the journey. A number of parishes and dioceses are proposing the abolishment of the *arancel* system in administering the sacraments which continues to be problematic, particularly for the impoverished and disenfranchised. The

Church should emphasize the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity in all its activities, ensuring robust support for the neglected sectors and promoting decision-making at the most local level.

CONCLUSION

As the Church looks to the future, it does so with hope and confidence, knowing that the Holy Spirit continues to guide and inspire its journey. In the face of uncertainty and adversity, the Church remains a beacon of light, shining forth the love and mercy of Christ to all who seek refuge in its embrace.

Across the dioceses of the Philippines, the Church's mission unfolds and evolves, a testament to the enduring power of faith and community. In synodality, prayer, and service, the faithful find strength and purpose, united in their shared journey of discipleship, and as they walk together, hand in hand, they bear witness to the transformative power of God's love in the world.

We entrust this synodal pilgrimage of the Filipino people unto the intercession and prayers of Mary, the icon of the synodal Church.

Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand
Report on the deepening aspects of the Synthesis Report
Additional listening and further Consultations

15th May 2024

How Can the Catholic Church in Thailand Be a Synodal Church in Mission?

1. Introduction: Synodal Experiences, Deep Reflection and Understanding

- 1) The Catholic Church in Thailand journeys together in the Synodal experience as a Synodal Church in the third millennium. It was a special time for deep reflection and concrete experience on the Decree of the Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Thailand A.D. 2015. It was a beautiful moment, a time of blessing for the richness of communion and growth as a synodal Church in a concrete way, responding to the call of the mission to proclaim the Gospel in the Thai Context.
- 2) The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand was involved in coordinating the collection of contributions from the dioceses, by proposing methods, processes, and timeframes for the various dioceses to carry out through the Synod working group, which has been active since the beginning of the synodal process in 2021. This process then proceeded with additional listening and consultations on issues that are consistent with and support the experiences and contexts of each diocese, through the active participation of priests, religious, other consecrated persons, lay association, and various Church movements.
- 3) Each diocese reflected on its commitment to maintain the dynamic lively journey of the Church by studying the document "A Synodal Church in Mission - Synthesis Report," including an in-depth study of theological reflection, canon laws, and consultations with expertise in related fields. The Dioceses further promoted initiatives to accompany God's people grow as a Synodal Church in

mission and fostering the sharing of experiences in their work and dynamic diversity among various organizations /movements within parish communities in their local contexts.

2. **How Can We Increase Our Co-responsibility from Diversity in Mission as God's People?**

- 4) The journey together of all Christians is an expression of living our *Sensus Fidei*, which is the awareness that we all through Baptism share the same dignity and vocation to participate in the life of the Church. This includes encouraging the faithful to read the Word of God personally and within their families and sharing the Word of God in parish communities. This practice helps every Christian live in harmony with their faith, follow the Word of God, be mindful of God's grace, and fulfill the role entrusted by the Holy Spirit as missionary disciples, who proclaim the Good News. (Decree No. 13) Therefore, Christians become missionary disciples according to their unique vocations and gifts to proclaim the Good News and heal the sick. (Cf. Lk 9:6)
- 5) The Church responds to divine love by living the spirituality of communion, expressed in unity at the image of the Holy Trinity, three Persons, one God, and the unity of Jesus Christ with His Church. God's people, therefore, focus on the image of the Synodal Church in communion (Decree No. 12). By this way, The Catholic Church in Thailand promotes the establishment of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) according to the guidelines of the Decree of Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Thailand (Decree (22-23) and journeys together with the Asian Church by moving towards Basic Human Communities (BHCs) (FABC, Bangkok Document: 148-149).
- 6) According to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, which states that the Church is "A people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (LG 4), God's people endeavor to imitate the relationships of the Holy Trinity. Therefore, they take up responsibility

according to their roles and duties, expressing their faith through active participation in the synodal Church. This participation involves promoting and supporting unity and commitment to pastoral care in all its forms of the priests, Consecrated persons, and lay people through the facilitation of the Diocesan Administration, the Bishop's Council and the clergy council. At the same time, there is a challenge to the priests to accept and support the lay people to participate in the pastoral care and the evangelization at the diocesan and parish levels. To this end, the strong participation of parish councils, organizations and movements must be supported, to foster greater participation of all Christians at all levels also in decision-making, not merely as co-workers, but as active participants in shaping the direction of mission and in the unity of the Church.

- 7) It is important to deepen the spirituality of the faithful and renew their faith by helping them "experience the love of God" in the Eucharistic Celebration and Popular Piety. To achieve this, the Eucharistic Celebration must be well-prepared, focusing on spiritual preparation and delivering meaningful sermons and liturgies. It is also important to encourage interaction before and after the Eucharistic Celebration and to motivate various groups within the parish community to carry out missions resulting from living the Word of God, such as visiting the sick, elderly, prisoners, those living far from the parish community, and engaging in other charitable activities.
- 8) The process of fostering participation in the parish involves collaborative efforts of the family, the parish community and the Catholic schools (Holistic Approach). This begins with listening and discernment to plan and integrate the responsibilities of all groups and sectors within the parish community. These groups include those involved in social development, women's groups, the elderly, various movements, neighborhood communities and schools. It also includes the creation of networks to collaborate with other organizations, such as rice merit network (networks of the

indigenous people for the preservation of their culture, care of the environment and the sharing of rice), women's networks, and conservation networks, based on the social teachings of the Church that "respect the rights and dignity of every human person," in order to respond to the needs of the society.

9) As People of God, the people of the baptized, we realize that we must take common responsibility for our common mission to offer strongly concrete responses to the needs and challenges of society such as:

- i. *The declaration of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand for the year 2024 – 2025 as the year of "Together, we care for the Earth"* is a collective commitment to care for the Earth, our common home, with resilience. It aims to foster awareness of environmental and climate crises, promoting ethical stewardship of natural resources through community-based environmental care initiatives. The Local Church needs to have a clear and common direction with a concrete plan and coordinated effort in all parishes, communities, and catholic schools, alongside collaboration with Government agencies, religious organizations, and civil society networks. This initiative aims to cultivate respect and consciousness toward creations, becoming actively involved in the mission of protecting our natural environment by loving the creation, loving our fellow humans, and loving God. (Decree 28)
- ii. *"Catholic Network against Human Trafficking in Thailand"* stands united in strong collaboration to combat human trafficking. This collaboration includes Talitha Kum Thailand working closely with Caritas Thailand and networking at all levels with the local churches, alongside Government agencies, and civil society organizations in advocacy, in raising awareness and in their efforts to effectively prevent and protect the

victims of human trafficking such as forced labor, the exploitation and abuse of children and women.

3. How can we enhance the differentiated co-responsibilities in the mission of all the members of the people of God? What ministries and participatory bodies can be renewed or introduced to better express these co-responsibilities?

❖ **Entering the Community of Faith: Christian Initiation.**

- 10) Christian Initiation is a journey by which the Lord, through the Ministry of the Church, introduces us to Easter faith and draws us into Trinitarian and ecclesial communion. (Synthesis Report, 3-a), which must be deepened through appropriate pastoral and theological reflection.
- 11) RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) is an important aspect of ongoing formation for entering the community of faith (Decree No. 36) including “the implementation of a true catechumenate of future spouses including all the steps of the sacramental path: time of preparation for marriage, its celebration, and the year immediately thereafter (Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life, 16-18). It should involve integrated collaboration among all concerned offices, such as the Christian Pastoral Care office, Catechesis office, and Liturgical Office, to establish unified guidelines for the Christian initiation of adults, ensuring effective formation of Christian lay people. It is also crucial to provide mentors for Christian initiation to assist candidates in encountering Jesus Christ personally until they are well-prepared to proclaim the Good News. Furthermore, provisions for children within the parish community, such as catechesis in schools, online catechesis, and summer catechesis camps, should be continuous and intensive activities carried out by each Diocese and various parish communities.
- 12) Additionally, catechists play an extremely important role in nurturing the faith of new Christians within faith communities. Therefore, ongoing formation and

increasing the number of catechists should be priorities for the Local Church.

❖ **People in Poverty, Protagonist of the Church's Journey**

- 13) Those in poverty ask the Church for love, which means respect, acceptance, and recognition. It is not solely about providing external assistance, but rather about upholding human dignity. This concept has implications coming from our Christological faith, as Jesus was a poor and humble man, a friend to the poor, who shared meals with them and condemned the causes of poverty (Synthesis Report 4-a, b). We also realize that poverty has many forms (Synthesis Report 4-c).

In this way, the Catholic Church in Thailand at every level including all parish communities, has the mission to care for vulnerable people such as the poor, marginalized, disadvantaged, refugees, migrants, ethnic groups, prisoners, etc. This first involves listening to their needs and helping them to develop a sense of human dignity within the context of Thai society, especially aiding those affected by violence and wars in neighboring countries. The Church initiates campaigns to encourage all faithful to assist victims of wars and natural disasters, supports collaboration among its various organizations, working closely with the Government sector and NGOs. Finally, the Church in Thailand should act following the social teachings of the Church, particularly focusing on justice, peace, equality, and equity.

❖ **On Evangelization: The Church is Mission**

- 14) The nature of the Church is mission: "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." (Jn. 20:21). As Christians, we all have a responsibility for the mission as "everyone is a disciple; all are missionaries" (Jn. 20:21). The Church's mission stems from Christ, who was sent by the Father under the lead of the Holy Spirit (Synthesis Report, No. 8-a). It is crucial for the Catholic Church in Thailand at every level to empower each faithful to become a missionary

disciple, proclaiming the Good News to the world because the Word of the Lord is compared to a seed that is sown in a field. (cf. LG 5).

- 15) For the mission of proclaiming the Good News to be truly the mission of the Church, it is necessary that each diocese must have both short and long-term mission plans, complete with mission teams or visiting teams for pastoral care and mission work. Dioceses should explore creative methods for evangelization, implementing follow-up, monitoring, evaluation, and allocating sufficient budget for missionary work.
- 16) The Catholic Church in Thailand acknowledges "Basic Ecclesial Communities" (BECs) as the most important principle for living as the New Way of being Church in Thailand, emphasizing the "community" dimension of the Church in the context of Thailand (Decree No. 23). Concrete plans are needed to achieve concrete pastoral care and evangelization through greater integrated collaboration among various groups, including family pastoral care as domestic church, support for the elderly, youth formation for family life, catechesis for students, and Catholic Organizations and Institutions, movement with specific charisms as responses to societal needs. Christians are encouraged to continue the mission of proclaiming the Good News according to their roles, duties, and gifts from the Holy Spirit.
- 17) The Catholic Church in Thailand realizes that all Christians are encouraged to be missionary disciples to proclaim the Good News (Cf. Decree No. 36-38). In this way, it is very important to reform the priests' and consecrated people's formation and ongoing formation in order to be ready to be missionaries in the Thai Context. The celebration of the 50th anniversary of Lux Mundi Major Seminary was an auspicious occasion to respond to the direction of the Synodal Church by opening an Assembly for Priestly Formation according to the guideline of *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and *Ratio Fundamentalis* 2016. In addition, an On-going

formation program for the laity is also provided regarding the theory and practice of Evangelization.

- 18) Catholic educational institutions are considered ideal environments for cultivating Gospel values (Decree No. 25). The Catholic Church in Thailand is therefore strongly committed to making Catholic schools a field of Pastoral work and Evangelization, ensuring they maintain a clear identity and uniqueness by integrating Gospel values into their curriculum. This continuous nurturing of students and staff with Gospel values and Catholic culture is essential.

❖ **Consecrated Life and Lay Associations and Movements:
A Charismatic Signs**

- 19) The local Church emphasizes the importance of organizing seminars, discussions, and collaborative networks involving priests, consecrated persons, individuals, and faithful from diverse parish communities. These gatherings provide opportunities for individuals to meet and share faith experiences, encouraging a lively faith witness and enthusiastic participation in pastoral care for unity of mission. The Church recognizes the dynamic aspect of its life in the living styles of professed individuals, lay co-workers, and various Lay Associations and Movements, all working together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the beauty of the life of the consecrated persons as missionary disciples. This community life exemplifies the growth of shared responsibility among all the Baptized (Synthesis Report, No. 10, a, b, c).

❖ **Mission in the Digital Environment** (Synthesis Report no. 17)

- 20) The Catholic Church in Thailand acknowledges that we cannot evangelize digital culture without first understanding it. Young people and among them, seminarians, young priests, and young consecrated men and women, often have profound and direct experience of

it and are best suited to carry out the Church's mission in the digital environment, as well as to accompany the rest of the community, including pastors, in becoming more familiar with its dynamics. (Synthesis Report No. 17- d).

- 21) The Church supports the use of social media as a powerful tool for communication, public relations, and promoting participation and unity among Christians. The Church also advocates for training and development in digital technology to enhance pastoral care and mission in the digital environment.

❖ **Structures for Participation**

- 22) Recent Church teachings, particularly '*Lumen Gentium*' and '*Evangelii Gaudium*', emphasize the shared responsibility of everyone in the mission, serving as the foundation for the parish community and local Church structures across all services, institutions, and pastoral care (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-31). Embracing the specific mission of lay people is essential, ensuring that Christian communities are not solely left to the care of bishops and priests (Synthesis Report, No. 18, paragraphs a, b).
- 23) All dioceses are encouraged to establish executive committees, and working groups to promote systematic plan, financial management and personnel development. These committees and organizations should operate with networks at all levels, fostering mutual sharing and learning. Collaboration is key to facilitating more opportunities for individuals to meet, communicate, and share their work.
- 24) Efforts to establish clear administrative structures within each parish are needed to facilitate participation among priests, religious women and men, and lay association and movement. Responsibilities will be shared and decentralized according to the differentiation of groups based on abilities and appropriateness, encouraging maximum participation across all groups, genders, and ages. Children and youth will be encouraged to play a

greater role in parish communities, enhancing pastoral care and evangelization efforts. The Church will support public relations initiatives to promote increased participation in parish and diocesan activities.

4. Conclusion

- 25) The Local Church has received advice to renew and keep the Synodal dynamism alive by engaging in more in-depth study and increasing the number of individuals involved in the Synodal Assembly. (Synthesis Report, Chapter 1, lett. m).
- 26) The results of the Synod, gathered through listening to one another, will guide diocesan pastoral planning, fostering implementation along the same direction, cooperation, sharing, and expression of fraternal love. Regular evaluation and monitoring will ensure sustainability in the mission of pastoral care and evangelization, aiming to a synodal Church, where all people walk together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to open new horizons for the authentic proclamation of the Good News (Decree, Chapter 4).
- 27) Finally, the Church is increasingly more aware of the importance of providing knowledge about the Synod and journeying together through training, awareness-raising, and spiritual development of the faithful at all levels, motivating them to be aware of their duties and roles. At the same time the Church should provide spiritual formation to help the faithful growing in synodality in their life, and being aware of the gifts of Baptism, becoming missionaries, who proclaim the Good News according to the gifts and vocation received.

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Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand

REPORT ON THE SECOND SYNODAL CONSULTATION OF THE TIMORESE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE (CET)

Preliminary Remarks

1. On May 16th to 17th 2024, the Timorese Episcopal Conference (CET) held a synodal consultation, gathering together to "examine the signs of the times" (GS 4) and reflecting on our journey as the Church. The primary objective of this Synodal Consultation was to share experiences and listen to the call of the Spirit to "live and grow as the synodal Church."
2. The Timorese Episcopal Conference (CET) comprises three dioceses: the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Dili, the Diocese of Baucau, and the Diocese of Maliana. Similar to the first synodal assembly in Rome, which featured the roundtable discussions that demonstrated the synodal spirit with the church representatives, all with equal dignity contributing to the common outcomes culminating in the mission, this consultation included the participation of three bishops, the Holy See's representative in Timor-Leste, the parish priests, the representatives of religious institutes, academics, the laity, the catechists, the various groups, the youth representatives, and the women's representatives, all committed to the Synodal Path. Despite many commonalities, these three Dioceses also present the rich cultural diversity that enhances our life and journey as Catholics. Nevertheless, we are also aware of the specific circumstances that each diocese faces namely geographical location, the socio-cultural treasure, and challenges as integral aspects that participants bring to the table, sharing their experiences and dreams for the Church.
3. The assembly members adopted various approaches during the sessions to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit throughout the Synod. This document represents the comprehensive effort to synthesize the discoveries

reported by the participants during the Second Synodal Consultation process.

COMMUNION

Good Practices

The Eucharist as the source and the center

4. The groups reported the sense of the communion in the daily practical life, emphasizing the Church as the community. In Timor-Leste, the experience of the concrete communion is especially evident in the Eucharist, in the liturgical and the sacramental celebrations as the source and center of communion.
5. The groups recognized the diversity of vocations, charisms and ministries as the richness for the communion. Despite these diversities, there is a shared awareness that the Church is one and that all must live in communion with Christ as the center. The groups also noted the experiences of the communion through various services, such as in the religious life, the social services, and the categorical groups etc.

The popular Piety that fosters the tradition of the faith

6. Timorese express the communion also through popular piety, particularly devotion to Our Lady and Saints highly venerated in their communities. This popular piety is manifested as the expression of religious devotion in the form of communal cult to Our Lady or the Saints, stemming from the faith and culture of the faithful. Many of these practices arise spontaneously from the faithful and become symbols of unity and the communion among Catholics that foster the tradition of faith.

The Timorese Culture

7. Some groups highlighted the Timorese cultural practice of "*nahe biti-boot*" (lit. the laying out of the mat) means the main tools of conflict resolution in Timorese's culture which serve as the cultural modality that facilitates people's understanding of the sense of the communion. According to them, the communion between the Church

and culture should emphasize the sense of the communion as a family.

The challenges

The superficiality of the communion

8. Participants noted that in many aspects, the communion remains superficial because it involves the emotions and the feelings ("my emotions or feelings dictate my communion"). There is a discrepancy between the manifestation of faith (showing) and the living of faith. This superficiality arises as the consequence of inadequate or flawed Catholic formation, which undermines the quality of life as Catholics.

The clerical cohesion remains fragile

9. Some groups reported that there is still inconsistency between words and actions of some of the clergy members. The clergy and the religious community sometimes do not serve as exemplary models through coherent living in their witnesses. At the parish level, some parish priests and vicars do not cooperate well with each other. Others mentioned that some parish priests favor certain categorical groups over others.
10. There is perception of disharmony between religious and diocesan priests. Another group mentioned the lack of communion within the formation houses between seminarians and their formators.

The external impact

11. From the external perspective, some groups reported the impact of globalization and media on the family communion. Many families are broken, with husbands and wives abandoning each other, which affects their children and the communion within the family.
12. Various challenges lead to the groupism within the families and the broader community, such as the martial arts groups, weakening family relationships and creating disturbances in the society.

Solutions / Proposals

13. The need to strengthen formation

- a) To provide basic and ongoing formation of faith in order to enhance the quality of communion.
- b) To transform the paradigm of formation and dismantle the pyramidal system.
- c) To balance the vertical and horizontal relational dynamics between the formators and those being formed in all formation houses;
- d) To foster the spirit of synodality in all formation houses.

14. The need to reinforce the clerical cohesion and parish administration

- a) To strengthen the presbyteral unity; the Diocesan Curia should be an instrument of communion.
- b) To embrace all the categorical groups within the Church.
- c) To enhance "the preferential option for the poor" and the solidarity with those who suffer. The Church must become a bond of communion.
- d) To strengthen the ecclesial communion and to standardize the guidelines (pastoral, catechesis, prayer, liturgy, ecclesial administration, Catholic education and so on).
- e) To encourage the clergy to embody the authenticity of their role: "shepherds with the smell of the sheep" (Pope Francis).
- f) To reinforce the synodality within the parish structures: the parish priest, vicar, and parish council as the synodal witness to ensure strong communion among them and to guide the parishioners to walk together.

15. *The need for the New Evangelization*

- a) To introduce the new evangelization harmonizing culture and faith and make faith become part of culture.
- b) To clearly define the relationship between faith and culture in order to discover the cultural values within the evangelical content for "In all culture there is the seed of the Word of God."
- c) To foster mutual cooperation in pastoral activities and be proactive in charitable actions.

PARTICIPATION

Good Practices

16. There are various positive signs indicating the participation of the parishioners in the ecclesial life; some are active (practicing) while others are passive (non-practicing). Specifically, practicing Catholics are those who consistently take part in the various Church celebrations, contributing in different ways (materially and spiritually) to the needs of activities and projects for the building of God's Kingdom in their localities: in liturgy, catechesis, physical service, material and intellectual support, etc. Generally, it is noted that the most actively participating Catholics are the catechists and their children, students of Catholic schools, categorical groups, and those involved in the parish structures; women's participation is very significant and helps reduce the patriarchal domination; active participation also include children's groups, adolescents, young people involved in the categorical groups, adults, and parents.
17. Despite the various challenges in the independence era, the Church still plays a pivotal role in the society. In spite of the social and political differences, the timorese continue to listen and collaborate with the Church, especially politicians and ex-seminarians who hold important positions in the government. Young generation still

strongly support the Church through the leadership of the clergy.

18. Popular piety has become the strong tradition in the faith and life of Timorese Catholics, starting from the early days of the evangelization in Timor-Leste. This popular piety is steadfast and has developed from time to time. Often, it is the parishioners themselves who take the initiative to organize the activities, from pastoral centers to parishes. The devotion to Our Lady holds the primary place throughout the territory of Timor-Leste, especially in the months of May and October; beside the devotion to the parish and community's patron saints; there is also the significant devotion to the Holy Cross, especially among the young people during National Youth Day; and the devotion to the Divine Mercy, which has grown in the independence era, etc. In order to overcome the various challenges (moral, spiritual, economic, social, and political) post-independence, the devotion stemming from the popular piety becomes a strong expression and a consistent witness of faith militancy within the community. Hence, inculturation vividly plays a big role in the various expressions of devotion.

The Challenges

19. Although Timor-Leste is recognized as the most proportionally Catholic country in Asia with 97% of faithful, there is still limited knowledge and proper understanding of the Church. Many Catholics perceive the Church as comprising the Pope, Bishops, clergy, nuns, catechists, and the pastoral agents. The Catechism of the Catholic Church has not yet become the primary reference in the catechetical formation. This also affects proper understanding of the meaning and the value of Sacraments, especially Baptism and Matrimony. For instance, in this era of post-independence, some Catholics receive the Sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony merely to fulfill civil requirements in order to obtain civil

documents for different purposes, including education and employment.

20. The inadequate quality of the catechetical formation, affects the quality of the participation of the parishioners in the ecclesial life. Many Catholics only participate in Christmas and Easter celebrations. Their participation remains massive, occasional, conditional, and instructional; dualism of faith and culture remains strong in the lives of many. Often, many tend to value cultural events more than living the faith. The Popular piety is very evident in the lives of the parishioners over the Eucharist as the center of their lives.
21. In terms of pastoral organization the parishioners complain that pastoral areas have not been properly managed. They demand the quality of pastoral care to be organized adequately, in terms of pastoral care for the youth, the poor, the marginalized and vulnerable, including people with special needs (mental and physical). In the context of the ecclesial governance, especially in the parishes, the parishioners expect good leadership (*pastor bonus*), good administration, transparency, good pastoral and economic management. In some cases, the leadership within the Church lacks good character, tenderness, hospitality and adequate care for the parishioners.

Solutions and Proposals

22. *The need for ongoing formation for promoting participation:*
 - a) To raise awareness about the common priesthood received through the baptism; to deepen knowledge about the value and the meaning of the Sacraments of christian initiation and reconciliation; to bring the Eucharist closer to the parishioners; to organize eucharistic celebrations for categorical groups (children, youth, students, parents, prisoners, the sick people, and those who live in the peripheries). For such liturgy

celebrations, music, readings and homily should be well-prepared.

- b) To continuously provide ongoing formation on the richness and the sense of liturgical celebration: ordinary, feast, and the solemnity; to emphasize in the catechesis the coherence between faith and action: *lex credendi, lex celebrandi, lex vivendi and lex orandi*.
- c) To provide basic formation of conscience on the Church as community of faith before receiving the Sacraments and ongoing formation afterwards.
- d) To provide intensive formation for the categorical groups: children, youth, couples, parents and godparents.
- e) To empower women to actively participate in parish structures and leadership.

23. *In the fields of pastoral care, social-charity and coordination:*

- a) To strengthen socio-charitable activities in caring for the needy; visit and provide relief and fraternal companionship.
- b) To strengthen coordination within parish structures: the parish priest and councils, with religious men and women; to evaluate parish activities, to introduce pastoral conversion: compassionate way in mission; hearty communication; and personal transformation.
- c) To establish dialogue between faith and culture in a variety of ways.
- d) To strengthen family pastoral care and Basic Ecclesial Community with the aim of making the parishioners more mature in their faith and morals by providing *lectio divina* and to accompany popular piety groups.
- e) To promote alumni of the seminaries to become pastoral agents of faith.
- f) To conduct studies on the inculturation in the Eucharist celebrations.

- g) To standardize manuals or guidelines at the Timorese Episcopal Conference (CET) level regarding the catechesis, sacraments, and administration.
- h) To introduce digital tools for the formation model and for facilitating the transmission of the eucharistic celebration.

MISSION

Good practices

- 24. In general, the Catholic Church in Timor-Leste has embraced the synodal spirit in its mission whereby laypeople and clergy walk together in pastoral mission according to their respective responsibilities.
- 25. The *cura animarum* mission is well carried out from the parish center to the peripheries.

The Challenges

Even though the mission in Timor-Leste is growing, there are certain fragilities that hinder it:

- 26. *Perception of the Church as the clerical institution*
 - a) In general, the parishioners often perceive the Church's mission as exclusively the responsibility of the clergy, religious institutes and apostolic society, thereby diminishing their own participation in the Church's mission;
 - b) Lack of cooperation between the parish priests and their vicars in their mission at the parish level;
 - c) Unhealthy competition among pastoral agents hinder the mutual cooperation for the mission;
 - d) Classification of the catechists based on some criteria within the diocese weakens their involvement in the mission;
 - e) The majority of the catechists are illiterate and lack adequate knowledge of faith, catechetical methods, and liturgical practices.

27. *Inadequate dialogue between faith and culture:*

- a) Lack of appropriate pastoral method to effectively carry out the mission work and build the God's Kingdom. Evangelization faces multiple challenges, particularly in the dialogue between faith and culture. Other movements such as the martial arts and the traditional rituals arts also pose challenges. Despite the various pastoral efforts by the Church, there is still no adequate pastoral approach for these groups. This reality also affects their limited participation in the ecclesial activities.
- b) There is still lack of pastoral care activities in the remote areas.
- c) There are incoherence whereby many parishioners receive Sacraments but they do not live accordingly.
- d) Some parishioners prioritize traditional way of living over the values of the Sacraments; particularly avoid the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which hinders their active participation in the ecclesial communion;
- e) There is misperception of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick as the sacrament of death;
- f) Some parishioners are negatively influenced by antagonistic groups towards the catholic faith, resulting in their desagregation from the ecclesial communion.

Solutions and Proposals

To address the identified fragilities mentioned above, participants of the Synod suggest:

28. *To Improve the quality of the clerical formation and Pastoral Care*

- a) To recommend to the bishops to ordain laypeople as the permanent deacons to assist the parish priests in their mission and to consider appointing more extraordinary ministers of holy communion in the parish
- b) To provide adequate resources to carry out missions in remote areas

- c) To insist Priests to better prepare their homilies and avoid speaking excessively and harshly;
- d) The Dioceses need to provide support for the religious priests who are dedicated to parish work to ensure the compliance with the norms/guidelines of the Local Church;
- e) To strengthen the prophetic voice against social injustice in Timor Leste
- f) To standardize the pastoral themes at the level of Timorese Episcopal Conference.
- g) To implement the theme of the Apostolic Visit of the Pope "**May your faith be your culture**" in order to reconcile faith and culture
- h) To institutionalize the digital pastoral platform for the Church's mission
- i) To propose to the relevant authorities by the bishops to regulate free access to websites that negatively impact moral values
- j) To standardize prayer texts and catechetical manuals at the national level

29. *The need for ongoing formation and the involvement of categorical groups:*

- a) To conduct ongoing formation for those who have already received baptism and to help parishioners for better understanding of the Sacraments they receive (mystagogy)
- b) To engage young people in the parish missions and contextualize their activities as apostles for the youth (youth as apostle to youth);
- c) To provide spiritual assistance to categorical groups in carrying out the parish's mission
- d) To foster active participation of the laity and raise the awareness of politicians of their roles in the evangelization
- e) To provide pastoral care for children, especially orphans.

- f) To establish family pastoral care in order to provide assistance and advocacy for those with especial needs, the children, the elderly, and the marginalized persons;
- g) To promote dialogue and pastoral-catechetical attendance with respect to cultural values in order to avoid religious syncretism between faith and culture;
- h) To establish formation centers in order to empower the catechists in accordance with the evolution of the modern world with a more participatory catechesis model and to provide adequate remuneration for the catechists.
- i) To extend theological, pastoral-catechetical and biblical formation for the laity in order to better assist the parish missions.
- j) To provide spiritual assistance to the martial and ritual art groups.

30. Final Remarks

The Second Synodal Consultation at the the Timorese Episcopal Conference (CET) has been a profound exercise in reflection, dialogue, collective discernment and spiritual listening. This gathering underscored the Catholic Church's commitment to embracing synodality, fostering inclusivity, and deepening its engagement with both faith and culture. The active participation of bishops, clergy, laypeople, and various representatives highlighted the Church's diverse yet unified nature, reflecting a rich horizon of experiences and perspectives.

The consultation brought to light the strengths and challenges within the Church in Timor-Leste, offering a clear path forward through practical recommendations. These include enhancing collaboration, increasing pastoral outreach, and promoting social justice, all aimed at creating a more vibrant, inclusive, and mission-oriented Church.

As we move forward, it is essential to heed the insights and recommendations from this consultation. By doing so, we can continue to grow and flourish as a synodal Church, dedicated to spreading the Gospel and embodying the love, justice, peace, reconciliation and integrity of creation that define our faith. This

journey requires a collective effort of all members of the Church, walking and working together in unity and purpose to build a stronger, more resilient community of believers in Timor-Leste.

CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF VIETNAM

Synthesis Report for Synod 2024

In preparation for the *Instrumentum laboris* of the Second Session of XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops taking place in October 2024 in Rome, by using the method of "Conversation in the Spirit", 26/27 dioceses in Vietnam have prayed, reflected, and discerned: "How can we be a synodal Church in mission?", based on the Synthesis Report of the First Session in October 2023. The following is a summary with three main parts: Communion, mission, and participation.

Part I: COMMUNION

The dioceses in Vietnam, in Part I: The Face of the Synodal Church, have chosen to reflect and listen on the following topics: Theme 1 - Synodality, experience and understanding (3 dioceses); Theme 2 - Gathered and sent by the Trinity (4 dioceses); Theme 3 - Entering the community of Faith: Christian Initiation (4 dioceses); Theme 4 - People in Poverty, Protagonists of the Church's journey (11 dioceses); Theme 5 - A Church "out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation" (01 diocese); Topic 7 - On the road towards Christian unity (01 diocese). The followings are the summary of the key points:

1. Synodality is a characteristic that has been associated with the essence of the Church. In the beginning, synodality is a characteristic of the Church, based on the Holy Trinity and the Baptism. Although synodality is not new in the history of the Church, it is new to the majority of Vietnamese faithful (My Tho). Therefore, the synodal journey helps the faithful discover the beauty of the synodal Church, as the family of God, walking together in communion with the Holy Trinity, with each other and with all human beings. In Her, all people are equal in their dignity as human beings and as children of God, and share the same responsibilities in the life and mission of the Church. "This equality motivates the faithful to work together to build the body of Christ, according to their own conditions and positions" (Phu Cuong). The experiences of synodality, in particular the conversations between the pastor and the community, bring great joy, each parishioner no

longer feels lost or forgotten in the parish community, but recognizes the gift that the Holy Spirit bestows on each person through Baptism.

To be a synodal Church in mission, first, it is necessary to educate all members of God's people, so that each Christian understands his or her true nature and important mission in the Church. It is necessary to build a synodal church structure rich in vitality and charity. In particular, each believer is aware of living his or her role and charisms, at the same time, there is a loving connection between members to create a peaceful environment for everyone. Shepherds need to interact with parishioners as a synodal partner, not just leaders. Finally, the Synod needs to listen to local churches from the third-world, or young dioceses, and to look at the wholeness and specificity of all sectors of the world, different people and cultures.

2. The synodal Church is rooted in the foundation that was gathered and sent by the Trinity. It is the mystery of the Trinity that draws us into the dynamic of communion and mission. In Vietnam, in various places, the faithful mainly practice their faith in a "hereditary", passive way. They are more survival than plentiful, gradually losing the sense of being gathered and sent (Bac Ninh). In addition, the dynamic and communion in the mission of the community is just by natural level, due to "the connection of the neighborhood", not really rooted in the dynamic of the Trinity, so the synodality is not truly a spiritual attitude (Saigon).

Therefore, to be a synodal church in mission, all members of the people of God must be aware that without communion with the Trinity, without success in living faith and mission. It is necessary to renew pastoral ministries based on a personal encounter with Christ. Through Him, with Him, and in Him, God constantly seeks and reaches out to man, to bring all into the fullness of life in the Trinity.

The method of "*Conversation in the Spirit*" is both an instrument and a way of synodality, which must be effectively applied to the life and ministries of the Church, dioceses, parishes, groups and families, so that all can listen to the Holy Spirit and listen to each

other. Together, we discern and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in daily life, especially in ministry and mission (Hanoi, Saigon).

3. Entering the community of faith. The journey of the synodal Church that she is journeying is inspiring all members of God's people to enter a new chapter of the proclamation of the Gospel. It is the experience of synodality, deep communion with the Holy Trinity and with each other, that arouses in the heart of the faithful a strong desire to go out and share that joy of communion with all people. To be a more synodal Church in mission, first, each faithful must be aware of the vocation and dignity through the Sacraments of Initiation. Deeply understand that we belong to Christ and share His ministries of priest, prophet and king.

In Vietnam, looking at evangelization, especially the catechism for catechumens, there is not enough personnel to accompany catechumens, and most of them do not receive proper learning and training, while today catechumens also have a high level of education (Kon Tum). Therefore, every member of God's people must be catechetically formed in order to go out and proclaim the Gospel. It is necessary to train specialized catechists in catechumenate and the preparation for marriage. It is necessary to understand and respect the culture of ethnic minorities, translating into ethnic languages of the Roman missal, the Bible, catecheses and prayers and hymns. In the Initiation process, the accompaniment of the entire parish is required. There should be a program to accompany catechumens and newly baptized, helping them integrate in the life of Church. For faith formation, educating the head must go hand in hand with educating the heart (Dalat, Kon Tum). The Vietnamese Catholic Bishops' Conference should have specific programs and strategies for evangelization. There should be a training program for catechists who are both doctrinal, biblical, and psychological, with spirituality, missionary enthusiasm, and approach (Ba Ria).

4. People in poverty, the protagonists of the Church's journey. This is the topic that is most pondered and discussed by many dioceses in Vietnam. The Church founded by Jesus is a poor Church and of the poor. It is Jesus who empties himself, becomes

poor freely, identifies himself with the poor, befriends them and stands with them. Therefore, the poor always have a privileged place in the Church, because they are "the precious treasure of the church." (Saint Laurenso deacon, martyr) (Thanh Hoa). Besides those who are materially poor, there are also those who are psychologically and spiritually poor. There are poor because they are in need of food and clothing, sick, old age, loneliness, and helpless orphans; there are also poor people who are treated unfairly, addicts, imprisoned, and broken families due to divorce and separation; poor people because of illiteracy, lack of living goal, lack of faith, lack of hope and having no meaning of life... The Church must always stand up for the poor, protect their rights, respect and listen to their voices (Thanh Hoa). Many poor people seem to be playing a 'supporting role' in the Church. Particularly in Vietnam, Vietnamese people still have a deep sense of 'respect for people with money and power', the voice and position of the poor and disadvantaged have not been properly recognized. This point of view has prevented the voice and contribution of many people, especially the 'little', who have not been listened, are barely involved, and seem like sub-members of the community.

Therefore, accompanying the poor is necessary and urgent for a synodal Church (Vinh Long). First, we must change our mindset, our way of being present and especially our way of life. We must get out of the view of seeing the poor as objects of charity, but seeing them as the center, as the protagonist, as the Church. The Church pays special attention to listening to the voice of the poor to know their concerns, aspirations, and expectations. It is necessary to build a culture of care in which everyone, especially the poor, feels loved, respected, supported, raised and heard, confident to contribute their part, even a little, to the mission of the Church. The diocese should aim for a church for the poor through a specific pastoral direction (Ha Tinh). In formation, it is necessary to train priests who know how to live poorly, belong to the poor, care for the poor, and dedicate themselves to the poor (Can Tho). Along with that, charity workers also need to be trained professionally, in order to work both "mindfully" and with optimal efficiency by the will of the Church. To study and disseminate the Church's Social Teaching to the faithful, to know how to work

together to help solve some of the current problems of poverty according to the teaching of the Church.

Part II. MISSION

In Part II: All disciples, missionaries; dioceses in Vietnam reflected and synodal discernment on the following topics: Theme 8 - The Church is mission (9 dioceses); Theme 9 - Women in the Life and Mission of the Church (4 dioceses); Theme 10 - Consecrated life and lay associations and movements: a charismatic sign (8 dioceses); Theme 11 - Deacons and Priests in a synodal Church (4 dioceses). Here is a summary of the main contents of the above topics:

5. The Church is a mission. The Church receives from Christ her only mission, the mission of proclaiming and witnessing to the Gospel. Therefore, all members of God's people, by receiving the same Baptism, are laity, consecrated men and women, or ordained ministers, all are of equal dignity and they are the same responsibility in carrying out the mission of the Church. The Church is a mission, and I am the church, so I am a mission. The exercise of co-responsibility is essential for synodality and is necessary at all levels of the Church (Hanoi, Can Tho).

To concretize, many dioceses in Vietnam have organized training courses, disseminated the doctrinal material of the synodal Church, strengthened and developed more Ecclesial Associations and Movements, and trained ministers of the Gospel, in order to help all members of God's people, especially laymen and laywomen, realize their dignity and vocation in the Church, a deep sense of one's role and responsibility in carrying out Church's mission (Hung Hoa, Phat Diem, Phan Thiet). When faithful deeply experience that "being Christian" is a priceless gift, they find themselves motivated to proclaim the Gospel or share the gift of faith with those around them (Saigon).

In particular, many dioceses have created conditions for the poor, disabled people, and those at the margins to express their opinions, to be heard and to contribute their part in the mission of the Church. For example, in *Phan Thiet* diocese, two children with disabilities, Roco Dao Hoang Thien and Cecilia Dao Thi Hoang

Nhien, participated in painting for the catechism book of the diocese. For ethnic minority people, dioceses such as *Da Lat, Ban Me Thuot, Kon Tum...* have translated missals, bibles, catechisms, prayers, hymns... into their native languages, both to help them understand the content of the Gospel, and to help them become active participants in proclaiming the Gospel in the plateaus of Vietnam.

However, there are also things to consider. In fact, lay people still seem to consider themselves or are perceived as second-class Christians. Many laymen and laywomen still have not recognized their vocation and primary mission to commit themselves in the life of society to building the Kingdom of God in the world. Many faithful do not experience the true joy and meaning when living the faith. That causes the Faith not to enter secular life, but on the contrary to be invaded and overwhelmed by secular life. In this sense, "subsidized" or "centralized" parish governance is a major obstacle that must be eliminated. The parish should become a family so that parishioners see themselves as true family members, not second-class Christians, thereby actively participating in the life and mission of the community. Lay people and families – especially young families and families in need – need the parish to provide the necessary support and equipment to fulfill their vocation and fulfill their mission (Saigon, Bac Ninh).

6. The role of women in the Church. In the social context of Vietnam still has a male chauvinist mentality, the Church in Vietnam is deeply aware of the importance, role, and uniqueness of women in the life and mission of the Church. In many places, women are proactive, volunteering, and effective in many parish activities, from choirs, catechists, sodalities, to being committed to serving the poor, the sick and the excluded. The fact that the Church admitted girls to altar servers and extended the washing of women's feet during the Last Supper Mass are positive and hopeful signs (My Tho). At the same time, giving some training and teaching in major seminaries and institutes of theology to highly educated nuns is a great idea to build a synodal Church (Thanh Hoa).

In addition, women, especially nuns, wish to be respected, cared for and supported pastorally by pastors, in order to serve the good of the Church. They need to be educated and trained in self-control, confidence and independence, to participate in the decision-making process and to assume roles of responsibility in the Church. Moreover, listening, accompanying and caring for women who have been abandoned, violent, sexually abused and underprivileged in society... is a necessity, not only for the Church but also for the civil authorities. This work must be taken seriously and urgently to protect the dignity, spirit and life of women (Thanh Hoa, Vinh).

There is much consensus that the ministry of Reading and the ministry of Acolyte should be given to suitable nuns or laywomen, but careful preparation is needed (Hue). Regarding the deaconate ordination for women, this is not a necessity for the Church in Vietnam. Vietnamese nuns and laywomen themselves do not want to become deacons, because in the Church, each person has a duty, a responsibility, and there are many opportunities for women to engage in apostolate activities that are properly with their abilities (Hai Phong).

7. The family is the pillar of every Christian community. Parents and grandparents were the first missionaries of their children and grandchildren. Daily faith practices, especially family prayers, and sharing God's Word, are the first lessons that help children know and believe in God. But today, many parents tend to focus on their children's secular education at school, to succeed in life, and pay little attention to educating their children in faith: not encouraging their children to go to Mass, to attend catechesis... Therefore, families and youth need to be cared for specially, so that families can become missionary bases and young people become pioneers in evangelization (Saigon). In every family, children need to know how to listen to their parents, But at the same time, parents need to know how to listen patiently to their children. Many struggling families need the company of pastors and professionals (Bac Ninh).

8. Evangelization. Regarding evangelization, many parishes only carry out by visiting, giving gifts, and charity. This leads to some

good effects such as generating new evangelizing points ... But there is a bad effect at these new points, because if the parish gives gifts, people go to church, but if not, they leave the church. Therefore, it should be noted that the heart of evangelization is the "direct proclamation of Jesus" (Kerygma), the Son of God who came to redeem human beings through the sacrifice of the Cross and who rose again, in order to lead everyone to God, the Father. This proclamation is made vividly through a life of charity, and service, bringing joy and hope to people.

In addition, evangelization needs to recognize the apostolic capacity of disabled people to contribute to the proclamation of the Gospel through their experiences of suffering, marginalization, and discrimination. They are the objects of service, but they are also collaborators in the proclamation of the Gospel as they serve each other and every day pray together for evangelization (Ba Ria).

9. Consecrated life and lay associations and movements.

Consecrated life and the lay movement became both a sign of grace for themselves and grace to the world. When they live their vocation and identity, they should be the Kingdom sign and the prophetic voice to the world today who are sleeping in their own passions and secularization. In the context of Vietnamese society, religious, consecrated persons, lay associations and movements have contributed much to the mission of proclamation of the Gospel, especially in contact with fellow religions, with the poor, and with non-religious brothers and sisters (Ha Tinh). The synodal lifestyle makes the consecrated come out more. Go to those who are disappointed, rekindle their faith, bandage their wounds and warm their hearts (Hue).

However, when being sent to serve in dioceses and parishes, many religious men and women still have a 'contractual, seasonal' mentality, not really committing their lives to the mandate of the Gospel. There are still inadequacies in their ministries, running follow superficiality, pay attention too much on finance, searching for favorable places, and barely having a religious community in disadvantaged or missionary areas (Ha Tinh). Therefore, religious men and women need to renew the mentality and structure of religious life, to correct what is not suitable, so that they can do

what God calls through the signs of the times in the third millennium (Buon Me Thuot). On the other hand, when inviting religious men and women to exercise pastoral ministry, it is necessary to be specific, clear and especially not too unexpected because it is difficult to respond. Cooperation between religious communities is a sign of witness (Kon -tum).

10. Deacons and Priests in a Synodal Church. Clericalism is an obstacle to ministry and evangelization (Da Lat, Vinh Long, Thai Binh). To eliminate clericalism, priests must strengthen a stable and mature inner life, through a stable and personal friendship with Christ, to the point of being ready to share His desires and attitudes (Bui Chu). Moreover, priests need to know how to listen, to dialogue with the Holy Spirit and others, especially to listen to understand the flock those are entrusted to the care of the priest.

On the other hand, although participation in liturgy of lay men and women is quite high (about 97 %), in many places it is still heavy in form, lacking in spiritual and doctrinal depth, making difficult for parish priests to help parishioners mature in the life of faith (Bui Chu). Therefore, it is necessary to renew the pastoral structures so that the spirit of co-responsibility of all members of the people of God is promoted. Organize meetings of pastoral councils at diocese, district and parish levels to listen to feedback and comments of parishioners in pastoral decisions frequently. Lay people need to rediscover their own vocation to become more positive Catholics.

Part III. PARTICIPATE

In Part III: Weaving Bonds, building communities, dioceses in Vietnam reflected, listened and discerned the following topics: Theme 14 - A synodal approach to the formation (9 dioceses); Theme 16 - Towards a listening and accompanying Church (11 dioceses); and Theme 17 - Mission in the Digital Environment (6 dioceses). Here is a summary of the key points from the above topics:

11. Synodality and the participation of each person. To be synodal is to walk together on the path named after Jesus (cf. Jn 14:6). In this journey, no one is "left behind", on the contrary, each

person is supported to be able to walk together on his or her feet. In this way, the whole community of people of God can live fully its vocation to Baptism, and enable each person to take an active part in the mission of the Church according to his or her own charism and vocation. In particular, for the Church in Vietnam, all members of God's people are called to participate in the formation, in listening and accompanying, in the digital-based proclamation of the Gospel, and in caring for the environment.

12. A synodal approach to formation. Synodal formation is comprehensive and urgent. It is the common work of all members of the people of God, each of whom is both an object, but also a subject, co-responsibility and synodality in the formation process. When walking together, training together. The heart of formation in synodal style is deepening Kerygma (initiating Preaching), that is, the encounter with Jesus, so that through Him we can encounter God, the Father. In particular, each faithful must make efforts to train himself in the style of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in order to be able to actively participate in the mission that God has entrusted to each person (Quy Nhon, Hai Phong, My Tho).

For the formation of priests and religious, candidates need to be trained in connection with the pastoral environment and daily life of the community, in order to always be aware of the path to holiness through service to others following Jesus' example and to reject the idea of "clericalism". Particularly in Vietnam, because many ethnic minorities have not yet received the Gospel, the Vietnamese Church should encourage and create conditions for young people to commit themselves to the vocation of consecration to carry out missionary missions suitable to each ethnic group (Ba Ria, Phan Thiet, Kon Tum, Phu Cuong).

For the formation of lay apostolates, formation in the style of synodality takes place first in the family atmosphere. There, every member of the family learns to love, serve, and care for one another following Jesus' example. Parents are the ones who educate their children in the faith, from an early age, by teaching them to make the Sign of the Cross, taking them to church to attend Mass and catechesis, reciting morning and evening prayers, and praying the

rosary... these ethical deeds are the "cradle" that cherishes faith for children (Quy Nhon, Phan Thiet).

However, the training in the style of synodality in Vietnam still has difficulties. First of all, emotional and sexuality education, accompanying young people on their development path has not been paid enough attention. Secondly, living in the cultural context of Asian people, the role and contributions of women have not been deeply considered. In addition, the training in philosophy, theology, humanities, psychology, bioethics,... still lacks cohesion and has not brought many positive results.

Therefore, it is necessary to open more training courses for laypeople in theology, liturgy, office skills... etc. During catechism sessions, retreats, or activities, aspects related to emotional and sexual education can be skillfully mentioned according to Christian concepts, suitable for each age group. The Mass is the most convenient and appropriate occasion for faith formation for God's people (Phan Thiet, Nha Trang, Ba Ria).

13. The Synodal Church: listening and accompanying. A synodal Church needs to be a Church that listens and accompanies. This commitment must be cultivated regularly and become a practical way of life, to be incorporated into the formation program, especially the formation for priesthood and religious men and women. All members of God's people, especially pastors in the Church, must learn to listen and accompany. In that, listening to the voices of the poor, those who suffer, those who divorce, and remarry, those who are morally hindered, and those who are homosexual... is urgent. Only by listening with Jesus' heart can we discover how to form God's people in accordance with His will (Hanoi, Phat Diem).

Each diocese and parish should have specific pastoral programs on listening and accompanying, such as: ministry of accompanying with families, youths, the elderly, the sick, those who are mentally wounded, excluded or abandoned, people who are grieving the loss of loved ones... and accompany the Catechumens to help them live their faith and integrate into the parish community (Hanoi, Ha Tinh).

In addition, to move towards a synodal Church in the context of Vietnamese culture and society, we need to actively have *interreligious dialogues and dialogues with the civil authorities* through forms such as visits, seminars, cultural exchanges, sports competitions... to listen to differences, to respect and love each other more as God taught (Phat Diem, Thai Binh, Xuan Loc, Long Xuyen, Hue).

14. Evangelization in the digital environment. Today, people tend to 'attach' their lives in the digital environment. Websites and media bring great benefits to society and the Church. However, there are also risks of undermining the faith life of Catholics, especially today's youth. In fact, not all faithful go online to listen to sermons or update Church's information, but mainly for entertainment or virtual life. Young people may spend hours on social media, but pay little attention to the Gospel message and official Church information.

Therefore, the universal and local Churches must have statutes that guide Catholic communicators to carry out their ministry well in the way of the Church. It is imperative to train personnel and create networks that connect "digital natives" together, in the service of the Gospel. At the same time, the local Church also needs to invest in personnel and instruments for the mission of proclaiming the Gospel in the digital environment, and continue to create digital applications such as the Word of God, Bible games, and Evangelization,... for convenient and useful use by everyone, so that more people know to learn about the Christian faith and the life of the Church (Saigon, Bui Chu, Phat Diem, Bac Ninh, Thanh Hoa, Vinh).

15. Protection of environment - an accompanying task. In Vietnam, environmental pollution, air pollution, water pollution, and noise pollution ... still at a high level. Therefore, in addition to applying sanctions, recycling, purchasing and decomposition of waste,... The dissemination and application of the spirit of "Laudato Si" that Pope Francis invites to protect the "common home" of humanity, is imperative and needs to be put into practice in the life of the Church. Specific ways such as, practice putting garbage in the right place, classifying waste after use; turning

down sounds and voices after 9:00 p.m.; limiting indiscriminate burning of garbage, gradually switching to using electric vehicles and equipment, solar cells; using water sparingly, not burying and throw garbage indiscriminately into canals, ponds, rivers and seas (Phan Thiet).

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