

Jubilee of Synodal Teams and Participatory Bodies

October 24 to 26, 2025, Rome

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Compiled by the Central Secretariat

I.

Introduction

The Jubilee of Synodal Teams and Participatory Bodies in Rome, 24 to 26 October 2025, is significant enough for the FABC Papers to present this FABC Paper. Synodality is very important to the Church and the FABC at this point, as the FABC has formed a Commission for Synodality to promote the implementation phase of the Synod on Synodality.

We present here a report on the Jubilee of Synodal Teams and Participatory Bodies in Rome, 24 to 26 October 2025. This is a good overview of what took place.

One of the highlights of the Jubilee was the time with Pope Leo. Each Continent was asked to present a report and ask a question to Pope Leo. This is significant, and the reports were by continent. Continental bodies that are specifically mentioned in *Praedicate Evangelium* 14 times! This is recognition of the new role of the continental bodies, such as the FABC. The attempt was to get a response from the world Church through the continental associations of the Bishops' Conferences.

This encounter with Pope Leo was structured with the following presentations:

1. Africa Report (SECAM)
2. Oceania Report (FCBCO)
3. North America Report (USCCB/CCCB)
4. Report of the Council of Eastern Catholic Patriarchs (ICC)
5. Latin America and the Caribbean Report (CELAM)
6. Europe Report (CCEE)
7. Asia Report (FABC)

Each report was concluded with a question for the Holy Father.

We do not include here all of the reports of the different continents. We do include here the question of each continent and the response of the Holy Father. This is significant in gaining an understanding of

Pope Leo XIV's perspective on synodality. We offer a focus on his responses. This is seen as being beneficial as we move to the future.

Finally, we present the FABC Report on Synodality. This was compiled with the help and participation of all of the members of the FABC Commission for Synodality. This was presented to the assembly in the Paul VI Hall and to Pope Leo by Fr. Clarence Devadass, the Executive Secretary of the FABC Commission for Synodality. This report and the question came from this Commission's collaboration and work to answer the questions presented by the General Secretariat of the Synod, and were very effectively presented by Fr. Clarence.

Pope Leo said, "The first thing that comes to mind is that I would like to say 'thank you' to the Church in Asia. If anyone faces challenges – because of language and cultural differences, geographical distance, poverty, and many other realities that you confront – yet has worked as hard as you have and has arrived where you are today in living this process not only of synodality but also of promoting communion and conversion, then I think we all should say thank you and congratulations to you.... But I think, again, the people of Asia can offer much hope. I hope that all of us together can be a sign of hope for the Church in Asia. With that, I simply express gratitude and great reverence for all those who are walking together in the Church in Asia."

II.

Jubilee for Synodal Teams and Participatory Bodies Report

Rome, 24–26 October 2025

The Jubilee for Synodal Teams and Participatory Bodies, held in Rome from 24 to 26 October 2025, was a remarkable gathering that brought together nearly two thousand people from diverse cultures, ministries, and ecclesial backgrounds. More than an ordinary conference, the event became a living expression of communion, participation, and mission, the three pillars at the heart of synodality. Representatives from parishes, dioceses, lay movements, religious congregations, and youth organizations came together to reflect on how the synodal journey is shaping the life and mission of the Church today. The Jubilee offered a space where dialogue, prayer, and shared discernment were not simply scheduled activities but essential dimensions of the experience. Participants listened deeply to one another and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, discovering in their diversity the richness present within the People of God.

Throughout the Jubilee, the many charisms of the Church were celebrated as gifts essential for her mission. The gathering served as a reminder that a Synodal Church is built not by a select few, but by the active, Spirit-led participation of all the faithful. Every voice—whether clergy, religious, or lay—has an irreplaceable role in shaping the Church's path forward. The event encouraged collaboration grounded in humility and service, inspiring participants to return to their communities renewed in their commitment to journey together as pilgrims of hope. It was clear that synodality is not merely an idea but a concrete and transformative way of being Church, one that calls for attentive listening, shared responsibility, and openness to the Spirit's guidance.

From Asia, around eighty participants took part in the Jubilee, representing the rich diversity of the continent. They included bishops, priests, religious men and women, lay leaders, and youth delegates. Their presence reflected the complex and vibrant reality of the Asian Church, where Catholics often form small minorities and where, in some places, the faith has deep historical roots. Each participant carried with them the experiences, joys, and hopes of their

local communities. Together, they offered perspectives shaped by Asia's cultural, social, and religious landscapes, enriching discussions on communion, participation, and mission. Their contributions demonstrated how the Asian Church continues to embrace synodality amid both significant challenges and promising opportunities.

On 24 October, the Asian participants gathered at the Pontifical Urban College for a meaningful time of reunion and shared reflection. For many, the gathering was an opportunity to reconnect with companions from the earlier Synod sessions, renewing bonds formed through months of prayerful dialogue and communal discernment. For others, especially those attending for the first time, it was a moment of welcome and an introduction to the wider Asian synodal family. The spirit of hospitality and fraternity was tangible as long-standing friendships deepened and new relationships blossomed.

The encounter opened with a moment of common prayer, entrusting the gathering to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Participants then shared in small groups, exchanging experiences from their local churches, the fruits they had witnessed, and the challenges they continued to face. These conversations followed the method of conversation in the Spirit, which encourages attentive listening, respectful dialogue, and communal discernment. Speaking in small circles allowed participants to share sincerely and freely. Many described the struggles faced by communities living as minorities in complex social environments, while others spoke of renewed participation among the laity, strengthened collaboration across ministries, and creative pastoral initiatives that emerged from local listening processes.

A notable feature of the gathering was the presence of Asians living outside the continent who traveled to Rome to join the Jubilee. Their perspectives, shaped by life in migrant and multicultural communities, added new depth to the reflection. Their experiences highlighted how the identity and mission of the Asian Church extend beyond geographic borders and are carried by its people wherever they go.

A particularly significant moment of the Jubilee took place during the audience with Pope Leo XIV, where participants from every continent gathered in a spirit of unity and shared purpose. This global encounter underscored the universal dimension of the synodal journey. During this gathering, the Asian delegation had the meaningful opportunity to present its Asia report, summarizing the fruits, challenges, and emerging insights from across the region. Sharing this report before the Holy Father and alongside representatives from other continents affirmed the voice of the Asian Church within the wider ecclesial family and strengthened its commitment to continue contributing actively to the global synodal process.

In addition, all members of the Asian delegation participated in the Jubilee's parallel sessions. Some were invited to present reflections and insights arising from their local contexts, while others served as facilitators for small group conversations. Their involvement enriched the discussions and highlighted the depth of pastoral creativity and discernment emerging from the Asian Church. These moments allowed participants not only to share their experiences but also to listen to the voices of others, strengthening the mutual exchange that lies at the heart of synodality.

By the conclusion of the Jubilee, a strong sense of unity, gratitude, and renewed purpose filled the hearts of the Asian participants. The days in Rome confirmed that synodality is a shared pilgrimage sustained by prayer, mutual listening, and the desire to walk together as one Church. The experience encouraged all who were present to continue fostering a culture of encounter, dialogue, and mission, confident that the Holy Spirit is guiding the Church toward deeper communion and a more vibrant missionary life.

III.

His Holiness Leo XIV Responds to Participants in the Jubilee of Synodal Teams and Participatory Bodies

Paul VI Audience Hall
Friday, 24 October 2025

Africa Report (SECAM)

Rev. Rafael Simbine Junior, Secretary General of SECAM
Priest from the Diocese of Xai-Xai in Mozambique

Question 1:

During the implementation phase, how can local Churches, particularly in Africa, both receive support from and inspire the whole Church, so that we walk can together in a spirit of “exchange of gifts,” respecting the principle of subsidiarity in local discernment and not imposing uniform models or undermining local initiative?

Holy Father:

Thank you very much, Father, for what you have shared about the work of synodality in Africa. First of all, I would like to greet all of you. Good evening. Buenas tardes!

I think the first word I would like to say – one that is not only for the Church in Africa, but for all of us this evening – is mission, and being missionary. The synodal process, as Pope Francis reminded us on numerous occasions, was intended to help the Church fulfil her primary role in the world, which is to be missionary: to announce the Gospel and to give witness to the person of Jesus Christ in every part of the world and to the ends of the earth. In the words of the Gospel: preaching, sharing and living what Jesus taught us.

I think the Church in Africa, in this sense, has much to offer to all of us. What you spoke about the synodal process helps us to build bridges and understand how the Church can be a bridge, especially in cultures where Christians are not the majority and often live alongside members of other religions, whether regional traditions or

world religions such as Islam. It reminds us that such contexts pose challenges, but at the same time also offer great opportunities.

What most of us have experienced over the past number of years in preparation for the Synod, and now at the beginning of this new phase of implementation, is precisely that synodality, to use your words, is not a campaign, it is a way of being and a way of being for the Church. It is a way of promoting an attitude, which begins with learning to listen to one another.

The gift of listening is something I think we all acknowledge, yet it has often been lost in certain sectors of the Church. We need to continue to discover how valuable it is, beginning with listening to the Word of God, to one another, and to the wisdom that we find in men and women, in members of the Church and also in those who are searching for the truth, even if they are not yet – or may never become – members of the Church.

In the African context, there are particular questions and realities that are both challenges and gifts, for example youth. When we compare Europe and Africa, one continent continues to grow older, while the other is filled with new life, youth and great vitality for the Church. There is also the gift of family, which is so important. The Church must reach out to people through young people and families, becoming an instrument of peacebuilding and offering models both in Africa – among African countries – and in different countries and continents, on issues such as promotion of peace and care for creation, among others.

In this sense, we have to be very clear: we are not looking for a uniform model, and we will not present a template that dictates to every country, “This is how you must do it.” Rather, we are speaking of conversion to a spirit of being Church by being missionary and building up the family of God. Thank you.

Oceania Report (FCBCO)

Dr. Susan Sela, FCBCO Representative

Director of the Pacific Technical and Further Education Institute of Fiji

Question 2:

The role of Continental Synodal Teams has been highlighted throughout the synodal journey, particularly in the implementation phase. Do you anticipate that the role of groupings of Churches – such as Continental Bishops' Conferences, national or regional Bishops' Conferences, and Ecclesiastical Provinces – will continue to grow in the life of the Church?

Holy Father:

First of all, allow me to greet Dr. Susan. She and I were members of the same table in the last session of the Synod, and it is nice to be at the same table again with you. Welcome.

The brief answer is yes. I do expect, and I hope, that the different groupings of Churches will continue to grow as expressions of communion in the Church, drawing on the gifts we are all receiving through this exercise – this “life of synodality.”

I want to offer a very concrete and brief example that, for me, was particularly striking. I was at a meeting recently with a bishop from your region, who said that the issue of climate change is so urgent that, if current trends continue, his country will disappear in less than 50 years. Meanwhile, we often find ourselves enjoying the luxury of sitting in very comfortable spaces and reflecting on topics that may at times seem theoretical. But when we listen to the urgent cry of people in different parts of the world – whether due to poverty, injustice, climate change, or a number of other causes – we realize that we are not merely reflecting on theoretical matters but that an urgent response is needed.

This is a concrete situation that I hope we all take very seriously. It echoes the call that Pope Francis issued to the whole Church and to the world ten years ago in *Laudato Si'*, reminding us that responding

to the cry of the earth is part of our faith commitment. We cannot be passive.

Therefore, I certainly hope that through Bishops' Conferences, Ecclesiastical Provinces, and Continental Conferences, we can address some of these very specific issues and make a difference. I think the Church has a voice, and we need to be courageous in raising our voice to change the world and make it a better place.

North America Report (USCCB/CCCB)

His Excellency Alain Faubert, Bishop of Valleyfield (Canada)

Member of the Ordinary Council of the Synod

Question 3:

What would you say to bishops and priests who are concerned that synodality may diminish their authority as pastors? How can we better understand and promote co-responsibility, accountability, and transparency in our dioceses and parishes?

Holy Father:

Thank you very much. The question refers to what is happening in Canada and the United States, which, interestingly enough, even in these days, as we are sitting here, are experiencing great difficulties. Two countries that were once considered among the closest of allies can, at times, grow distant from one another. This is yet another example – another proof – of why synodality, listening, and dialogue are so important, and how they have concrete applications in our daily lives.

Referring to the specific question, I would like to return to an expression that Dr. Susan used a few minutes ago, when she spoke of “pace and scale,” reminding us that not all things move at the same rhythm or speed and that there are indeed differences.

One of the disagreements that apparently many of you experienced – judging by your reaction when the question was asked – is the concern among some pastors or bishops that their authority may be diminished. Apparently, some of you have had that conversation, let us say. I would like to invite all of you, as we were invited during the Synod sessions, to reflect upon what synodality is about, and to invite the priests, particularly even more so than the bishops, I think, to somehow open their hearts and take part in these processes.

Oftentimes, the resistances come out of fear and lack of knowledge. Every person who has reported so far from his or her region has listed

formation as a priority. And I think we have to be very clear and sincere about the importance of formation on every level.

Sometimes, ready-made answers are given without the proper, necessary preparation in order to arrive at the conclusion that maybe some of us have already drawn, but others are not yet ready or capable of understanding. Without proper formation on every level – whether in schools, seminaries, ongoing formation programs, adult formation for the laity, et cetera – there are going to be resistances and a lack of understanding.

I think that, at least to a certain extent, we have to understand that we do not all run at the same speed, and sometimes we have to be patient with one another. Rather than having only a few people running ahead and leaving many others behind – which could even cause a rift in the ecclesial experience – we must seek ways, sometimes very concrete ones, to understand what is happening in each place, what the resistances are or where they come from, and what we can do to increasingly encourage the experience of communion in this Church, which is synodal.

So with that, I think that the concrete reality – understanding within the American, United States culture – is that many structures which already exist have great potential for being synodal. We must find ways of continuing to transform them into more inclusive kinds of experiences. Whether on pastoral councils, or in other diocesan structures or gatherings, the inclusion of people – men and women, laity and clergy, women and men religious, et cetera – can help all to take part and feel a deep co-responsible sense of belonging, leadership, and accountability in the life of the Church. Obviously, there are challenges, but I think some significant steps have already been taken, and hopefully that will continue. Thank you.

Report of the Council of Eastern Catholic Patriarchs (ICC)

His Excellency Mounir Khairallah, Bishop of Batrum

President of the Maronite Patriarchal Committee for the Follow-up to the Synod

Question 4:

In our Eastern Churches, taking into account our specificities, and in the Latin dioceses, what are the urgent changes and fundamental conversions to which we are called in order to truly put synodality into practice in our participatory bodies at the parish and diocesan levels, and in the Eastern Synods as well as in our formation bodies (seminaries, novitiates, formation of young people and laity, Catholic schools and universities)?

Holy Father:

Could I begin by saying that - without excluding any other region of the world - if there is a place in the world today that really needs signs of hope, it is in the Middle East. I think that we all wish to be that sign of hope.

One of the signs of hope, which I think is very significant, which has been mentioned once or twice, and which is definitely a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit, is the gift of enthusiasm. We find this in the Churches of the Middle East and also among those Christians in the diaspora - because unfortunately, so many Christians have had to leave their homes and emigrate to other parts of the world. In them, we find that the gift of faith gives them the strength, endurance, courage they need to continue to go forward, even after many times having lost everything.

I think that it is at those times when we as the Church need to be united and come together to be that authentic sign of hope, but also a very real expression of Christian charity, a fraternal love, a care for one another, especially for those people who have had everything taken away from them because of the destruction of war and hatred among us.

I think that the challenges in the Middle East, which the Oriental Churches have continued to take on and to move forward with, are something that we need to understand more in the West, if you will. As we look at synodal processes, we need to understand that there are also significant differences between the Latin Church and the Eastern Churches, and we need to respect those differences. I think that is the first step in any community, in any human organization: if we do not respect one another, we will never begin to know one another, and therefore never truly come to know one another.

I think there are a number of things that we can talk about, as you mentioned in your question. But again, formation is obviously part of the answer, which we have mentioned already a couple of times – on every level. “Conversation in the Spirit,” to understand that taking part in a synodal process is taking part in the Church, and that we need to learn, first and foremost, to listen to the Holy Spirit in many different ways and to take part in a spiritual journey. Just as so many of your people have had to journey, we need to understand that our hearts can remain open to the Holy Spirit only if we recognize, live and experience the importance of prayer – the importance of a spiritual life, both individually and in community, in our parish communities, our religious communities and in different kinds of gathering. In that way, we can continue to grow in the ability to listen to one another and to discern the best ways to move forward.

I think there is so much that we need to pray for in terms of finding the strength to accompany you and your people; to truly witness to Jesus Christ, as you were saying: in the land where he was born, lived, martyred and rose from the dead – the ultimate sign of all of our hope; to be true promoters of pardon and reconciliation, which are so necessary; and to learn that in pardoning and working towards reconciliation, we can indeed build greater unity among all peoples.

Latin America and the Caribbean Report (CELAM)

Mr. Nicolas Meyer, Member of the Synodal team of CELAM

Coordinator of the Regional Conference of Caritas for Latin America and the Caribbean

Question 5:

How can the synodal process encourage and inspire our societies to be more inclusive, just, and peacemakers?

Holy Father:

Thank you very much for the report, for everything that is being done in Latin America in this process and for long before.

I believe that the Church should be very grateful for the many things we have learned from Latin America. The gift of faith, enthusiasm, the spirit of communion, which in many cases is part of the very culture of the peoples who are traditionally — truly — very united and who have — let us say — transformed this gift — of communion, of fraternity of brothers and sisters — into an experience that is expressed very well in the Church and that teaches many of us to continue on an authentically synodal journey.

Now I will say something that has nothing to do with what I have just said, but which perhaps concerns the question as such. And I don't want to offend, I say it in advance. Personally, when someone asks, "How can a process help inspire us?", I say that few times in my life have I felt inspired by a process. I feel inspired by people who live the faith with enthusiasm. All of you have come in these days as synodal teams, but to live the Jubilee. And I think it is very important to understand that the Jubilee is an invitation to conversion, reconciliation and new life that we have received from Jesus Christ. And to live this spirit — and we are talking about the spirituality of synodality — but it is the spirituality of the Gospel, of communion, of wanting to be Church. These are aspects that can truly inspire us to continue to be Church and to build paths of inclusion, inviting many more people — all of them — to accompany us, to walk with us. And

so I believe that it is fundamental in all this that we all live an authentic conversion and that we discover in our hearts, through all the elements that we have talked about, an authentic spirituality that begins with listening to the Word of God, that discernment of the presence of the Spirit, where the Holy Spirit is calling us, and sharing this experience with methods such as conversation in the Spirit. To live that closeness with Christ himself that can kindle in our hearts the desire to be disciples, faithful missionary disciples on the journey.

When we live with this enthusiasm, with this conviction, we will see that many more people will actually want to join us and be builders of peace and communion. Thank you.

Europe Report (CCEE)

Prof. Klara Antonia Csiszar, Member of the CCEE Synodal Team
Professor of Pastoral Theology at the Catholic Private University of
Linz

Question 6:

What hopes can women legitimately nurture in a synodal Church? Do you believe that an authentic cultural change is taking place in the Church, such as to make equality between women and men in the Church a reality lived in the future?

Holy Father:

Thank you, Professor, for the report and also for this question. I start with two very personal experiences of mine, starting with my family. I lived in a Catholic family where my mother, and also my father, both of them, were very, very active in the parish. To my mother once, years ago, when there was a lot of talk in the States – I am already talking about the seventies – about equality between women and men, I said: “But do you want to be equal to men?” And she told me: “No, because we are already better!” And she certainly didn’t say it jokingly. There are many gifts that women have that they could offer, even then, in many ways, in the life of the family, of the parish. Not only my mother, but many women.

A second experience comes from Peru, where there is a Congregation of religious, of consecrated women, whose charism is to work where there are no priests. They have the power to baptize, to attend weddings... They do wonderful missionary work, which is truly a testimony for many priests as well. This is the courage it takes to proclaim the Gospel, and it is women who do it!

So on the question, leaving aside the – let’s say – most difficult issues, which are part of the work of a study group that is being presented, I think that the problem is not that there are no possibilities, but that there are culturally obstacles. And this must be recognized, because not all bishops or priests want to allow women to exercise what could be their role very well. There are cultures where women still suffer

from differences – as if they were second-class citizens, so to speak – and do not actually always have the same rights. So there is a challenge for the Church and for all of us, to see how we can promote together respect for the rights of all; how can we promote a culture where these things become not only possible, but reality, in a co-participation of all, each according to his or her own vocation, where all can exercise – let us say – a role of responsibility in the Church. We have seen many examples in facts. But the reality is that culturally not all countries are in the same place as Europe or the United States... And we cannot simply think that by appointing a woman here or there for this or that position she will be respected, because there are strong cultural differences that create problems. And so we need to talk about how the Church can be a force for conversion, the transformation of cultures, according to the values of the Gospel. Unfortunately, many times the form in which we live the faith is more determined by our culture and less by our Gospel values! It is there that we can all be a strength, an inspiration, an invitation for our nations, our communities, our cultures, to reflect on the differences that exist and not only between men and women. In many countries there are still differences according to class or rank in society: one cannot be appointed to such an office because he will be rejected by the others... There are prejudices, discriminations that exist and that clearly go against the Gospel, and we are often powerless in the face of these realities.

So there is a lot to do, certainly. I believe that the Church already offers spaces to begin and continue this journey and we must, here too, be courageous, accompany situations and realities so that, little by little, perhaps changes can be introduced, transformations of these cultures, in which authentic discrimination can be eliminated and they can become communities in which the gifts, the charism of each person are truly respected and valued. Thank you!

Asia Report (FABC)

Fr. Clarence Sandanaraj Devadass (Malaysia),

Member of the FABC Synodal Team, Executive Secretary of the FABC Commission for Synodality, and Priest of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, Director of the Catholic Research Centre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Question 7:

What message would you like to share with the Churches in Asia to encourage synodal conversion?

Holy Father:

The first thing that comes to mind is that I would like to say “thank you” to the Church in Asia. If anyone faces challenges – because of language and cultural differences, geographical distance, poverty, and many other realities that you confront – yet has worked as hard as you have and has arrived where you are today in living this process not only of synodality but also of promoting communion and conversion, then I think we all should say thank you and congratulations to you.

You said dialogue is essential for peaceful coexistence. I think that, because of many interreligious realities – realities that are not unique to Asia, of course, but are so widespread – given that, with the exception of the Philippines, if I am not mistaken, Christianity is a minority everywhere, to face the challenges that come with living the faith and being disciples of Jesus Christ, including in places where there is oppression and it is difficult to live the faith, I think there are many things before which we all need to bow down and respect the holy ground that Asia is for the present and future of the Church.

There is a sense of mystery and an understanding of the divine that is, I think, part of many of the religions in Asia, and this certainly opens the door to different kinds of interreligious dialogue. I think this is a treasure for the whole Church: Eastern and Western. I also believe it is something that is valued by many cultures in Asia, and something from which we also, I think, could learn.

Because of this, when we talk about the spirit, about the spirit of synodality and about “Conversation in the Spirit,” there is, if you will, a mystical or contemplative element to it that perhaps we can continue to discover. I do not say “understand,” because I think it goes far beyond understanding. But there is a contact with the divine from which we can all learn, including from many in Asia and in the East.

There are, of course, great challenges: the structural and economic realities that you deal with, and the difficulty of promoting even basic communication on a wide scale because of the limitations within the local Churches. These are realities that I think we need to confront together. I think that this synodal experience of building communion should inspire all of us, if you will, to be more generous in sharing resources, so that we can have perhaps greater equality and greater justice, even in the distribution of the goods and material blessings that many churches could share with others. Obviously, there are great challenges in doing that, yet, there are great efforts being made to do that already, of course, which should be recognized. It is an ongoing process.

But I think, again, the people of Asia can offer much hope. I hope that all of us together can be a sign of hope for the Church in Asia. With that, I simply express gratitude and great reverence for all those who are walking together in the Church in Asia. Thank you.

IV.

THE FABC SYNODAL REPORT

SYNODALITY IN ASIA: IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

A Panoramic Presentation

The praxis of synodality, walking together as a Church in communion, participation, and mission, has found fertile ground in Asia, a continent marked by religious pluralism, cultural diversity, and complex socio-political realities. While the Synod on Synodality has global significance, its impact in Asia is particularly profound due to the region's unique ecclesial and societal contexts.

Impact of Synodality in Asia

1. Renewed Emphasis on Dialogue

In a region where Christians are often minorities, synodality has deepened the Church's commitment to interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Dialogue is not optional but essential for peaceful coexistence. The synodal process has encouraged local churches to engage more deeply with their neighbors, fostering mutual understanding and harmony.

2. Empowerment of the Laity

Synodality has elevated the role of laypeople, especially women and youth, in Church leadership and decision-making. By affirming baptismal dignity and charisms, it promotes inclusive participation at all levels of ecclesial life.

3. Strengthening Local Churches

The synodal journey has encouraged local churches to articulate their unique challenges and experiences, leading to more contextualized theology and pastoral approaches rooted in the lived realities of Asian communities.

4. Spiritual Renewal

Listening and discernment have sparked spiritual awakenings in many dioceses. Basic Christian Communities are embracing a spirituality of communion, integrating into Basic Human and Ecological Communities. Positive feedback from Conversations in the Spirit continues to emerge during this implementation phase.

5. Digital Engagement

Digital platforms have become vital tools for consultation, catechesis, and community building, especially among youth. These technologies enable broader participation and amplify voices from diverse contexts.

6. Walking together as the Church in Asia

The synodal process has unfolded alongside the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) 50th anniversary, strengthening continental bonds and inspiring deeper collaboration across Asia.

Challenges of Synodality in Asia

1. Conceptual Ambiguity

The term “synodality” remains difficult to translate and communicate across Asia’s diverse linguistic and cultural landscapes, leading to confusion and uneven understanding.

2. Clericalism and Resistance to Change

Some clergy perceive synodality as a threat to traditional authority, creating resistance that hinders effective implementation and inclusive participation.

3. Formation and Capacity Building

There is a pressing need for trained facilitators and broader formation among clergy, religious, and laity. Without this, synodal engagement risks being superficial or misunderstood.

4. Minority Status and Political Pressures

In areas facing religious extremism or political constraints, public expressions of synodality are limited, affecting the Church's ability to fully live out its mission.

5. Structural Limitations

Many dioceses lack the infrastructure to sustain synodal practices. Embedding synodality into parish life requires structural renewal and a shift in mindset toward participatory leadership.

6. Inequality

Economic and technological divides risk excluding the poor and marginalized. Some synod reports reveal that these groups feel the Church is not walking closely enough with them.

Synodality in Asia is both a gift and a task. It offers a transformative vision for the Church, rooted in communion and mission, while also demanding courage, creativity, and commitment to overcome deep-seated challenges. As Asian churches continue this journey, their experiences will enrich the global Church's understanding of what it truly means to walk together in faith.

Synodal Experiences from the Implementation Phase

1. Long-term Pastoral Planning

Dioceses are developing long-term pastoral roadmaps inspired by synodal principles. Examples include India's Mission 2033 and Pilgrims of Hope, Thailand's national framework, and the Philippines' Synodal Implementation Framework, all reflecting strategic clarity and shared mission.

2. Engaging Key Stakeholders

Key gatherings with seminary rectors (Bangkok, April 2025), religious formators (Kuala Lumpur, August 2025), and youth ministers (Vietnam, September 2025) show a commitment to deepening formation and cultivating leadership that embodies synodality.

Some materials in this issue are reprints from Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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FABC Papers:

168. The Body of Christ in the Pandemic: Theological Reflections from Asian Perspectives, submitted by FABC-Office of Theological Concerns (OTC), edited by Estela Padilla, Executive Secretary, OTC, August 2022
169. The Body of Christ in the Pandemic: Theological Reflections from Asian Perspectives, submitted by FABC-Office of Theological Concerns (OTC), edited by Estela Padilla, Executive Secretary, OTC, August 2022
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