



African SYNODALITY

ISSUE 002 June 2022

Communion, Participation & Mission

The African Team at the Vatican



SOUTH AFRICA
Sr. Hermenegild Makoro



TANZANIA
Rev. Fr. Nicholas Segeja M'hela



BUKINA FASO
Fr. Paul Béré



SENEGAL
Sr. Anne Beatrice Faye



EGYPT
Bishop Bakhoun Kiroulos



KENYA
Mr. George Sunguh

The General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops in the Vatican is supported by four Commissions in the preparation of the 2023 Synod on Synodality - a two-year preparatory phase involving Catholic dioceses worldwide.

The four Commissions composed of about 60 religious and lay experts from around the world are charged with assisting in reviewing documents, drafting resources, and developing best practices. The Commissions are namely Theology, Spirituality, Methodology, and Communication.

There are six experts drawn from various African countries forming part of the four commissions as listed here:

Rev. Sr. Hermenegild Makoro, CPS (Methodology Commission)

Rev Sr. Hermenegild is the past immediate Secretary-General of the Southern African Bishops Conference and a member of the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood in the Diocese of Mthatha in South Africa. She made her first profession in 1976 and holds a higher diploma in education from the University of Transkei and a bachelor of theology from the University of Natal – Pietermaritzburg.

Rev. Nicholas Segeja M'hela, (Theology Commission)

Fr. Nicholas Segeja is a Professor in Pastoral Theology and currently Director of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) Gaba Campus in Eldoret, Kenya.

He is a member of the **International Theological Commission** working under the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Commission is composed of not more than thirty scholars from diverse Schools and Nations. Among other things, the role of the Commission is to help the Holy See and primarily the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in doing research and examining questions of major importance. This is usually in pertaining to the doctrine of the Church, its morals and pastoral praxis.

Fr. Segeja is serving in this Commission for the second term of five years. He was a member of the Commission for the first term from 2014 to 2019 and reappointed in the same from 2021 to 2026.

He is also a member of the Theological Commission under the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops. The aim of the Commission is to assist the Pontifical Secretariat of the Synod in its work; namely, reviewing the texts and documents and making suggestions if necessary; presenting (theological) proposals for the development of synodality; and producing and sharing materials for theological deepening.

Rev. Fr. Paul Béré (Commission for Theology)

Fr. Paul is a Jesuit biblical scholar from Burkina Faso and a permanent teacher at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. He was among ten biblical scholars appointed on December 15, 2020, as new members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission by Pope Francis. On September 30, 2019, he emerged winner of the Ratzinger Prize awarded by the Benedict XVI - Joseph Ratzinger Foundation, in the Vatican, making him the first African theologian to win the Ratzinger Prize which rewards the work of theologians and specialists in related disciplines.

Rev. Sr. Anne Béatrice Faye

Rev. Sr. Anne Béatrice Faye is a nun of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception of Castres. She holds a Doctor of Philosophy from the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, Senegal. After 5 years of mission in Rome as a member of the General Team of her Institute, she has been on a mission in Burkina Faso since October 2013 for the formation of young people. She is interested in the promotion of women in the African context. She is also a Professor of philosophy at the Saint Augustin Centre in Dakar and the Grand Séminaire Interdiocésain in Brun. Member of the ATA (Association of African Theologians). A member of the Academic Council of the Ecumenical Institute Al mowafaqa in Morocco - Rabat, she is also a professor of philosophy at the same Institute.

Member of the African Academy of Religious, Social, and Political Sciences. Since June 2021, member of the Commission of Theologians for the next synod 2023.

Bishop Hani Bakhom Kiroulos (Communication Commission)

Mgrs Kiroulos has been a Full Professor for the Coptic Catholic Major Seminary in Cairo and at the Theological Institute of Sakakini in Cairo and at the Franciscan Institute

since September 2010.

He served as a Professor at the University of Canon Law of Lugano with the Course: Introduction to Orthodox Law 2013-2014.

Prior to his priesthood he worked for two years as a telecommunications engineer after graduating in 1996.

In 1998 he entered the Redemptoris Mater seminary in Rome, a diocesan and missionary seminary for priesthood formation.

He finished his theological studies at the Gregorian University in 2002.

For two years he was on a mission in Sudan.

He was ordained a priest on December 29, 2004 for the Coptic Catholic Church, and he held the position of vice parish priest in Rome at the Parish of St. Irenaeus for a year.

In February 2006 he was sent on a mission, with the post of vice rector of the Redemptoris Mater seminary in Lebanon.

In 2009 he obtained a doctorate in Canon Law from the Lateran University of Rome. His thesis: "The relationship between the Holy See

and the Patriarchal Church."

He has served as the Secretary of His Beatitude The Catholic Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria and Secretary of the Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Egypt since July 2010. He was born in Cairo on May 4, 1974.

Mr. George Sunguh (Communication Commission)

Mr. Sunguh is the past immediate President of the Union of the Catholic African Press (UCAP) and a member of the Advisory Council of the continental body.

He is an award-winning seasoned journalist based in Mombasa, Kenya. He is an experienced editor with a demonstrated history of working in the communication services industry. Today he is the Publisher and Managing Editor of African Shipping Review – a quarterly magazine covering maritime issues in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Mr. Sunguh holds an MA Degree in Media and Communications in Journalism from the University of Leicester in the UK.

He is married with four children.

SIGNIS AFRICA

SIGNIS-AFRICA CONGRESS AND DELEGATES ASSEMBLY

THEME:
COMMUNICATION, SYNODALITY AND THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

Goal of the Congress: To bring together Catholic Communication Professionals and other interested parties to celebrate their common profession and also deliberate on some of the fundamental questions of the Synod on Synodality.

Venue: Sainte Famille Hotels, Kigali, Rwanda.
Date: Monday, 11th to Friday, 15th July, 2022

REGISTRATION
Registration opens on Friday, 1st April and closes on Friday 10th June, 2022.
Registration Fee is in accordance with choice of lodging:
Category A: Sainte Famille Hotels - Four Hundred US Dollars (\$400.00)
Category B: Saint Paul Court - Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars (\$250.00)

To Register, send a message with your name, country, and accommodation of choice via email or WhatsApp to the following:

Rev. Fr. Prof. Walter C. Hejirika
President, SIGNIS Africa
Chairman, Continental Organizing Committee
Walter.hejirika@uniloft.edu.ig
Tel/WhatsApp: +234-805-490-3041

Rev. Fr. Fidele Mutabazi
National Director of Comm
Chairman, IDC
mutabazide@gmail.com
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Message from the Synod Secretariat



For many of you, the month of June means synthesis of the work of listening and discernment carried out at the local level. Some national realities (Episcopal Conferences, Religious Congregations, Associations....) have already met to reread together the fruit of this listening and prepare the synthesis to be delivered to the General Secretariat of the Synod.

Even for us of the Communication Commission, who have tried to tell you about the synodal process since its opening from the grassroots up, the month of June will mean a temporary suspension of this service.

Not that the Litterae Communionis (letters of communion) will cease. On the contrary, we already have some news in mind for when we resume after the summer. On the other hand, walking together takes time and practice; and besides, the listening time is not entirely over! We will inform you about this in due course.

In the meantime, continue to send us your contributions and we will continue to put them on the **synodresources.org** website and send you, if necessary, some useful information to continue our walk together. We also invite you to follow us on our social channels (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram).

In the hope that you have enjoyed walking with us, we wish you all a good summer and say see you soon.

The Litterae Communionis team.

Thierry Bonaventura,
Communication Manager of the
General Secretariat of the
Synod of the Bishops

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Message from the Editor



6 We thirst for that Synodality news from your parish, congregation, society, or even at a personal level. Please share it with our readers.

The African Synod Newsletter has engaged the second gear as we bring to you this second edition packed with news from Africa. We appreciate the fact that the Synod process is taking place at different rhythms in the different parts of Africa and the whole world as well.

Since the beginning of this process, one thing is certain – that it has given voice to the unheard, to the periphery, and it is not only to be practiced in the church. We are called upon to live it in our daily lives, in our own family, community, workplace, church, and society.

Remember we thirst for that Synodality news from your parish, congregation, society, or even at a personal level. Please share it with our readers.

It is on the same note that we continue appealing to every Catholic journalist working for newspapers, broadcast media, and new media in every corner of Africa to continue to do the needful – share with us news from your respective jurisdiction to enrich this newsletter.

You are indeed the Pope's foot soldiers when it comes to evangelizing the world through the media. Just like you did an admirable job during COVID 19 pandemic --working with courage as you made sacrifices to gather and share information during times of immense uncertainty.

We encourage you once again to soldier on by providing our readers with on every step of this historic process.

**George Sunguh,
Member - Communication
Commission of the Synod of
Bishops in the Vatican.**

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Synodality is an expression of the Church's style. The word "Synod" says it all; it means "journeying together." And the movement is the fruit of docility to the Holy Spirit, who directs this history, in which all have a part to play.





Seek to Tap into Laity's Expertise “to progress faster” in Synodality

Members of the Clergy who tap into the expertise of the Laity have been known to “progress faster” in their respective apostolates, positively contributing to the ongoing preparations for the Synod on Synodality, a Catholic Archbishop in Kenya has said.

In an interview with ACI Africa on the sidelines of the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop John Mbinda of Lodwar Diocese, Archbishop Maurice Muhatia Makumba said that when Priests and Bishops collaborate with the lay faithful in matters of the faith community just like they are currently participating in the preparations for the 2023 Synod, boosts church progress.

“Synodality is more than just development, just financial (and) funding issues; it is about creating a family and sitting around a table where everybody is able to see each

other and communicate,” Archbishop Muhatia said.

The Kenyan Archbishop explained during the June 3 interview, “Those who work closely with the laity benefit from their expertise, their skills and their resourcefulness, and are more likely to progress faster; they are more successful in their pastoral approach.”

The most critical areas that require the spirit of Synodality when Priests and Bishops can explore the expertise of the Laity include pastoral, financial, and development matters, he said, adding that members of the Clergy cannot have “knowledge of everything”.

“Bishops and Priests need to be ready to listen and to learn and to involve as many people as possible in what is going on in the church, especially in decision making in the most critical areas,” the Archbishop who chairs the Seminary Episcopal

Commission (SEC) of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) told ACI Africa.

Involving the Laity in the decision-making process in the church, he said, “is a fact that we don't have to go to the moon to understand. Those who involve the laity in matters of development, in matters of finance, the parish grow faster.”

The lay people in Kisumu Archdiocese, he said, have expressed appreciation for being allowed to participate in the affairs of the church, the Catholic Church leader said in reference to his Metropolitan See where, he added, he has sought to fully involve lay experts in various fields to foster development in the local church.

The Local Ordinary of Kenya's Kisumu Archdiocese who has been at the helm of Kisumu Archdiocese since March 19 and doubles as KCCB Vice Chairman further said in



Synodal Process Ongoing in South Sudanese Diocese

By Sheila Pires (ACI Africa)

The people of God in South Sudan's Malakal Diocese are taking part in the ongoing preparations for the Synod on Synodality despite the humanitarian emergency due to floods, the Local Ordinary of the South Sudanese Diocese has said.

In an interview with ACI Africa, Bishop Stephen Nyodho Ador Majwok underscored the value of the Synodal process, and described it as "an important journey for the people of God."

"Our concern has been on emergency, humanitarian emergency", Bishop Nyodho said,

adding that despite efforts to address threats to livelihoods due to floods, "we continue also to sensitize the faithful about the importance of the Synod, because it is the journey together, the journey of faith with the people of God."

"The issue of flooding has affected pastoral work as people are concerned about their livelihood," he said, adding that the Diocese, one of the most affected by floods in South Sudan, is "under water".

"The Diocese is under water up to now," Bishop Nyodho said, and added, "the floods have affected most of our parish work, and (since) we could not manage, some of our Parishes are closed ... most people

have fled to higher grounds."

South Sudan has been experiencing heavy downpours since May 2021, according to reports by the United Nations Office for the Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA).

In the report, UNOCHA notes that the country's largest camp for displaced persons in Bentiu that "has been hosting 107,130 people is now hosting 120,000 people and is surrounded by floodwaters cutting its access by road and is kept away from flooding by a 3 metres high dyke."

In the February 19 interview with ACI Africa on the sidelines of the Episcopal Ordination of Mons. Mark Kadima Wamukoya for Kenya's Bungoma Diocese, Bishop Nyodho said that despite the floods, the Diocese of Malakal "is trying to make it (Synodal process) real for the people of God" as "an important journey for the people of God."

The Synodal process is a journey "that we have to walk together, starting with the Bishop, the Clergy and Religious and all people of God," the South Sudanese Bishop said.

He went on to express his gratitude to those who have reached out to those affected by the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan, highlighting the support from Kenya.

"I appreciate and am grateful to the people of God in Kenya, the faithful for the humanitarian assistance, most especially for the prayers," Bishop Nyodho who has been at the helm of Malakal Diocese since his Episcopal Ordination July 2019 said. "The people of God in Kenya have been standing with the people of South Sudan for long during the time of liberation, and especially with the church," he said, adding, "we are grateful for that; God has answered the prayers and peace has come to South Sudan."

The South Sudanese Bishop further said that "although sometimes we go back to our personal quarrel in the country, but we still appreciate the people of Kenya for the great role they played in helping the people of South Sudan."

A Synodal Process: Moving forward in the Spirit



**Sr. Nathalie Becquart, XMCJ,
Vatican Undersecretary to the
General Secretariat of the Synod
of Bishops**

The National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM) in the US, held its second virtual conference from May 31 – June 2, 2022. The theme was *Moving Forward in the Spirit: Becoming A Synodal Church*

Taking a cue from the *Vademecum*, the conference planning committee developed a format for panel discussions based on the three components of building synodality: *Listen, Dialogue, and Participate*. As Pope Francis had previously noted, we must be a listening Church; in addition to listening to the Holy Spirit, we ought to listen (*corde audire*) to one another as we discuss our hopes and strains of discord that are causing strife amongst us. Nathalie Becquart, XMCJ, Vatican Undersecretary to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops gave the keynote address. She stressed the need to develop the art of reciprocity among all the people of God as a sign of journeying together.

The panelists consisted of a bishop and two lay persons with background and expertise to speak to the specific area for that particular session. The panelists for the first session, *Creating a Culture of Listening* were Bishop Thomas Zinkula (Diocese of Davenport),

Continued on Page9...

...Tap into Laity's Expertise

reference to the Laity, "The more we involve them, the better for us."

Archbishop Muhatia further reflected on the relationship between the 56th World Communication Day (WCD) and the ongoing preparations for the Synod on Synodality and said the theme for the two, which is listening, is an invitation for the people of God to have an encounter with each other.

The WCD that was marked on May 29 and the ongoing preparations for the Synod on Synodality are "an invitation to encounter people, to encounter things for ourselves, to avoid fake news because fake news is a result of lack of encounter," he said.

The Kenyan Archbishop who chairs the KCCB Commission that oversees the running of four national Major Seminaries in Kenya said that if the society does not embrace listening, then the church is likely to encounter the same

challenges, unless she transforms that society.

"We are human beings, who have been brought up differently, how we embrace reality, how we embrace other people; there's a risk that we could have people who don't listen enough even in the church and therefore we need to grow together; hence Synodality," he said.

The 54-year-old Archbishop who started his Episcopal Ministry in Kenya's Nakuru Diocese in February 2010 said that church and society are directly linked and that the situation of the society in most cases determines the situation of the church.


"The Church doesn't have a special pool from which she gets the group called Christians or Catholics; she draws them from all sectors of our society," Archbishop Muhatia said, adding that the Church will get as good as what the society gives.

He highlighted the role of the church as molding and educating

the people of God into better human beings, saying, "The Church is a child of society, she doesn't exist in a tree. The people who go to Church are the same people who go to school, who go to work; they go everywhere and they live in a society."

Have you covered a Synodality event in your Parish or Diocese? Do you have an interesting story or experience on Synodality that you would like to share?

Please send a brief outline to: **synodafrican@gmail.com**
or
WhatsApp: +254 722703971





Catholic Bishops Conference of Ethiopia Holds Consultation Meeting on Synodality

By Bezawit Assefa

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Ethiopia recently held a consultation meeting on the Synod 2021-2023 at the General Secretariat of the Conference in Addis Ababa.

His Eminence Cardinal Berhaneyesus who is the Metropolitan Archbishop and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ethiopia, plus all the Bishops, Pastoral coordinators of Dioceses, National Synod Stirring Committee members and staffs of the General Secretariat attended the consultation forum.

His Excellency Abune Mussie briefly

presented the history and tradition of Church synodality, the strength and the challenges of the Church in the process of implementing synodality through centuries.

He also explored the apostolic journey of the Church in the Apostolic Age, in the first and Second centuries, the Synodal Journey after the Second Vatican Council, and the Synod Church in the Third Century.

Commenting on the points mentioned by Pope Francis in his call for a "Synodal Church", Abune Mussie calls up on all Bishops, priests, missionaries and the lay faithful to work together towards achieving the goal of the Journey to

the Synodal Church. He also urges all to actively participate in the implementation of the processes guided by the Holy Spirit.

Dioceses and vicariates presented the challenges they have faced during the process so far. The National Stirring Committee on its part, said it will coordinate the consultation of dioceses and facilitate with the needed assistance.

In accordance with the international synod timeline, the consultation phase will be followed by preparation of the draft document.

The method for preparing the draft document was presented by Abba Gabriel W/Hana, National Pastoral Ministry Coordinator.

Pope Francis Postpones Visit to Africa

Pope Francis' July trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan has been postponed for health reasons, the Vatican said on Friday.

"At the request of his doctors, and in order not to jeopardize the results of the therapy that he is undergoing for his knee, the Holy Father has been forced to postpone, with regret, his Apostolic Journey to the Democratic Republic of Congo and to South Sudan," Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said on June 10.

The trip, planned for July 2-7, will be moved "to a later date to be determined," the statement said.

Pope Francis was planning to spend July 2-5 in the Congolese cities of Kinshasa and Goma, and July 5-7 in the South Sudanese capital Juba.

The July 2-7 pastoral trip will mark Pope Francis' third visit to sub-Saharan Africa.

The journey could have been the first papal visit to South Sudan, which became an independent state in 2011, and the third papal trip to the DRC, which is home to Africa's largest Catholic population.



Pope Francis kisses the feet of several South Sudanese leaders, during a recent visit to the Vatican for a retreat in an unprecedented gesture. This was in a plea for peace in the country.

...Moving forward in the Spirit

Dr. Dorothy Mensah-Aggrey (University of Dayton), and Clarissa Ann Martinez (St. John Eudes Parish, Chatsworth, CA). For the first panel, it was all about relationships. One listens with the heart when there is a solid, loving, and respectful relationship. The panelists for the second session, *Creating a Culture of Dialogue* were Bishop John Stowe, OFM (Diocese of Lexington), Becky Eldredge (Ignatian Ministries, Baton Rouge, LA), and Dr. Hosffman Ospino (Boston College School of Theology). They discussed how the practice of proper discernment leads

to renewed pastoral life. Session three, *Creating a Culture of Participation* consisted of Bishop Arturo Cepeda (Archdiocese of Detroit), Dr. Marti Jewell (University of Dallas), and Amy McEntee (RCL Benziger). This panel discussed viable ways of ensuring participation from all members of the Body of Christ. Dr. Mark Edosy (Marian University) and Cecilia Flores (Sacramento Area Congregations Together) emceed and moderated all three sessions. These are some of the questions that the three panels discussed: How can we better listen to understand, and not merely to respond – especially with those who feel less than welcomed and included in the Church?

How do we address situations where discernment seems to lead us to confront the attitude of "we've always done it that way?"

In light of current ecclesial realities, what opportunities do you see for making this vision of participation more of a living reality?

The panelists provided much information for further discussions and the feedback from participants was highly positive. The hope is that other organizations would take a cue from NALM's conference and create their own synodal processes if they have not already done so.

Respectfully submitted
Dorothy Mensah-Aggrey, Ph. D.,
CPO, (University of Dayton)



How Botswana's Language Culture is Enabling Vibrant Participation in Synodal Process

Language has not been an issue because they are able to express themselves and those leading the discussions are local people... People are excited to speak about their Church - **Arch. Nubuasah**

The people of God in a Catholic Diocese in Botswana are finding it easy to fully participate in the ongoing Synod on Synodality conversations using the language they are most familiar with, the Local Ordinary of the Diocese has said.

In an interview with ACI Africa, Archbishop Frank Atese Nubuasah of Botswana's Catholic Diocese of Gaborone said that those leading the Synodal conversations in his Episcopal See are locals who are able to address the people in the language that they know.

Asked to share what the people's experience with the ongoing preparations for the Synod on Synodality process had been so far, Archbishop Nubuasah said, "Language has not been an issue because they are able to express themselves and those leading the discussions are local people.... People are excited to speak about their Church."

An estimated 90 percent of the population in Botswana speak Setswana in a country that recognizes English as one of its official languages.

The Local Ordinary of Gaborone told ACI Africa that Synodal conversations had taken deep root in Small Christian Communities (SCCs), attracting eager participation of Church members at the grassroots.

African Theologians Advocate for Adoption of African Values in Synod on Synodality



Participants in the recent Synod on Synodality symposium of Theologians organized by the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM) suggested that the Synodal process be anchored in African values.

The team of Theologians who were selected to represent various segments of the Church in Africa suggested that as the people of God journey together in the Synod process, they need to readopt such African values as the care for each other and the environment and other helpful values, ... [page20](#)

...Botswana's Language Culture

"We have been living the Synodal process all these years. We have been practicing it in SCCs. Our groups are Synodal because we consult, discuss and then make decisions," the 72-year-old Catholic Church leader who was elevated to the rank of "Archbishop ad personam" in July 2021 said. He added in reference to the Synod on Synodality, "Since the document came from the Holy See, we have started the process. We have finished consultations on the ground so we are now compiling to be able to have the diocesan celebrations, hopefully in the next two weeks, then head to the conference level." The member of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) said that in Gaborone, the approach to the Synodal conversations had been left open. "We had no questionnaires so we just opened it for the people to talk;

talk about your Church, where you are, where you want to be and the issues involved," he said, and added, "Some people expect to be making decisions now but that is not the process. The process is to make us aware that we are a Synodal Church where we move and work together to evangelize." In an interview with ACI Africa, Archbishop Nubuasah addressed other topics, including the Church's initiatives to end human trafficking in Botswana and the Diocese's plan to start an online radio. Highlighting the country's hospitality to migrants, the Ghanaian-born Archbishop said, "Botswana has very few migrants, mostly from SADC countries so it's (Human trafficking) not really an issue for us. We support whoever comes; we integrate them." He said the biggest challenge in the fight against human trafficking in

Botswana is the fact that the country is used as a conduit place. The Archbishop explained that those coming from North, Central and West Africa use Botswana as a starting point to be able to go to South Africa or outside. "We have been cooperating with the government in arresting some of these situations and repatriating people. We are involved in counseling, providing facilities and even repatriation of people to their homes," Archbishop Nubuasah told ACI Africa. On adapting new strategies to evangelize in the COVID-19 times, the Archbishop said, "We are starting an online radio station to be able to evangelize our people in the remote areas who may not be able to come to Church especially with COVID-19 restrictions."



Maurice Cardinal Piat: Synodality Church is Antidote to Clericalism

By Jude Atemanke (*aciafrica*)

The Bishop of Port Louis Diocese in Mauritius, Maurice Cardinal Piat has, in his latest pastoral letter for the Lenten period, said that the Synod on Synodality and the ongoing preparation are part of the Catholic Church's initiatives to counteract clericalism.

In the pastoral letter, Cardinal Piat highlights the effects of clericalism in the Church today and proposes walking together with the faithful as an appropriate way forward.

"In order to act on the root cause of evil, Pope Francis clearly asks us to adopt synodality as a way of life and functioning in the Church," Cardinal Piat says.

The Mauritian Cardinal adds in reference to synodality, "This expression means 'walking together'.

It is about adopting the habit of reflecting, discerning and deciding together between lay people, Priests and religious at different levels of the Church's life."

"This way of doing things is essential today as the antidote to clericalism and as the way to allow a true renewal of the Church under the action of the Spirit," Cardinal Piat says in his 17-page Pastoral Letter, which he unveiled March 4 2022.

The member of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans) further says, "It is in this spirit that Pope Francis has called the whole Church to a synod from October 2021 until October 2023. He is not inviting us to discuss the theme of synodality but to have a concrete experience of walking together in the Church to discern what steps each diocese, each parish, each religious community, each movement/service can take to advance on this journey of conversion for a refoundation of ecclesial life."

"The fruitfulness of this journey depends to a large extent on the choice we make to undertake or to participate in processes of listening, dialogue, and community discernment to which each and every one of us can contribute," Cardinal Piat says.

He goes on to highlight the effects of clericalism in the Church saying, "If the Church has a role to play in times of crisis, it is to participate in the search for a healthier democratic way of living together in our country.

To play this role, the Church itself needs to question itself and recognize that it too has its weaknesses."

"We cannot forget the suffering experienced by minors and vulnerable adults because of sexual abuse, abuse of power and abuse of conscience committed by a significant number of Priests and consecrated persons," the 80-year-old Mauritius Cardinal says.

He adds, "Faced with the pain of our brothers and sisters wounded in their flesh as well as in their spirit, for too long the Church has not been able to listen sufficiently to the cry of the victims, nor to protect them as it should have."

...Church is Antidote to Clericalism

These deep wounds, Cardinal Piat says, are “difficult to heal, and for which we can never ask enough forgiveness.”

Making reference to August 2018 pastoral letter of Pope Francis to the faithful, Cardinal Piat says the Holy Father invites us “to recognize that at the source of these abuses and lack of regard for the victims is the weight of a culture steeped in clericalism, where too much power is concentrated in Priests alone, where decisions are prepared and taken in too small circles, where the fear of the Church’s reputation has led to the neglect of an elementary listening and respect for those wounded by abuse.”

“This culture, inherited from the past and not sufficiently challenged, has resulted in twisted forms of authority on which various types of abuse have been grafted (abuse of

power, economic abuse, sexual abuse),” he adds.

At the heart of all the suffering endured by the victims, and of all the shame felt by the people of God, Cardinal Piat says, “There is the desire to find in the crisis the call and the trigger to re-found the path of Christian and ecclesial life.”

“If the source of all the evil caused by abuse is this concentration of decision-making power in the hands of the clergy, our responsibility is not only to convert ourselves personally,” Cardinal Piat says, and adds, “We must also recognize that this path of conversion is unthinkable without the active participation of all the components of the People of God.”

As a way forward, Cardinal Piat says the Synod on Synodality “invites the different groups and tendencies within the Church to enter into

dialogue.”

The Synod on Synodality, the Local Ordinary of Port Louis further says, “also invites the Church to be open to listening to those who do not frequent the Church, to our brothers and sisters of other Christian Churches and other religions. They too may have things to say to us.”

In this kind of journey, the Cardinal says, “There are often surprises and we must prepare ourselves for them with great trust in the Spirit.”

“I urge my Christian brothers and sisters to participate in this Synod. Bring your experience of life in the Church, with its joys and sorrows, share your hope, your discernment. Join your brothers and sisters, including those of other faiths, who are also searching for a path of light,” he says.



Synod 2021-2023

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The Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, in collaboration with various global Catholic institutions, is offering an intercontinental and intercultural series of free online courses on the theology and practice of synodality. These courses are intended to support all the people of God — Bishops, priests, religious men and women, lay men and women — who have been called to this process of ecclesial renewal.

All the courses are completely free of charge and will be offered online in several languages — Spanish, English, Portuguese, French and Italian. Speakers from all the continents will participate, allowing for a global and intercultural vision of the Church.

The first course will be held in July 2022. Over a period of three weeks, different topics on **"Common Discernment and Decision Making in the Church"** will be offered. You are invited to register, using the link below, and get involved in imagining and building the Church of the third millennium.



A working group of Theologians, Professionals and Academics during the symposium.

African Scholars Hoping for **Lengthy Synodality** Beyond October 2023 Synod of Bishops

By **Agnes Aineah** (ACI Africa)

A working group of theologians, professionals, and academics who participated in a symposium that the African Synodality Initiative (ASI) organized on the ongoing preparations for the Synod on Synodality have exuded confidence that the synodal deliberations will live beyond the October 2023 Synod of Bishops.

ASI is a partnership between the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM), the Symposium

of the Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), and the Association of Member Episcopal Conference in Eastern Africa (AMECEA).

It was established to generate creative ideas and resources that aim to support local churches in Africa and enable them to engage fruitfully and constructively in the synodal process.

In a report ASI representatives compiled following their three-day colloquium which they shared with ACI Africa, the team of African scholars comprising members of the

Clergy, women and men Religious, and the Laity said that Synodality is supposed to be an everyday way of the Church, and therefore timeless.

"It is our hope that Synodality will not end with the synod. We believe that Synodality is an ongoing, long-term pedagogy and way of life of the Church," the team of scholars said in their report following the ASI colloquium.

The report was signed by 18 Theologians and professionals from around Africa, including Sr. Wilhelmina Uhai Tunu, a member of the Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church Organization Sr.

Dr. Josée Ngalula, a member of the International Theological Commission, Sr. Leonida Katunge, an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya, and Fr. Anthony Makunde, the Secretary General of AMECEA.

In the report, ASI representatives cautioned against “a mentality of rigidity”.

They said, “By building openness and systems of trust, by changing a mentality of rigidity and building a culture of listening that is open to suggestions and critiques, we believe that we can truly become a Spirit-filled Church, a living witness to Christ at the service of the marginalized and excluded in Africa and the world, and a place that welcomes all God’s people.”

The colloquium brought together scholars from across Africa who explored the element of listening to the Synod on Synodality process from an African perspective.

The purpose of the colloquium was to provide a platform for Catholics on the African continent to discuss, discern, and propose a vision of Synodality from an African perspective.

In an interview with ACI Africa on the sidelines of the March event, Fr. Nicholas Segeja M’hela from Tanzania who serves as the Director of Gaba campus of Kenya-based Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) said that the journey of the Synod on Synodality is an opportunity to rethink the diverse African values.

The member of the Clergy of Tanzania’s Catholic Diocese of Mwanza who also serves at the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops underscored the need to isolate helpful African cultures from retrogressive ones.

“Solidity implies illuminating the dark parts of our cultures. We need to critically look at what is happening around us, to promote what is useful and to leave out what is not. The Word of God will guide us in this process. The teachings of the Church and the wisdom of other people will help us in this discernment,” he told ACI Africa.

The Communication Commission of the Synod of Bishops in the Vatican is organizing a webinar on **“Digital Media for a Synodal Church”** for English Speaking Africa.

We invite all Catholic Digital Media practitioners to participate.

Those interested to send:

Name:

Country of residence:

Social Media Handle:

WhatsApp number

Latest: **15th June 2021**

to: **synodafrican@gmail.com**

The French and Portuguese fora to follow shortly.



In their May 6 report, ASI representatives made reference to the story of Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles chapter 2, saying that the story “deliberately frames this vision of Synodality”.

“It is a story of disciples still gathered, closed fearfully in on themselves, who were driven by the Holy Spirit out of themselves, out of their fears, into the marketplace, into history,” the African Catholic scholars said, and added, “We the Church are the result of this Spirit-filled act of boldness. Today, we are called to a renewal of this Pentecost event.”

They said that Synodality is not “a new catchphrase” but an invitation to thoroughly reform and renew the Church to better serve God’s people.

Synodality, according to ASI representatives, is also an invitation to respond to the multiple threats to life that characterize the daily experiences of the people of God.

In their call to the people of God to embrace an un-ending culture of Synodality, the scholars said, “We implore the Holy Spirit to accompany this Synodal journey, and we deeply believe that the Church of the third millennium should embrace the path of Synodality.”

“We commit ourselves to serve as facilitators in educating and promoting awareness of and building a culture of Synodality. We also resolve to avail ourselves for the next phases of the Synod on Synodality and beyond,” ASI representatives said in their report shared with ACI Africa.

By Sheila Pires (Maputo)

The challenges single mothers face as members of the Church in the region covered by the Inter-regional Meeting of the Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA) are among the topics of the ongoing Synod on Synodality, a Catholic Priest has said.

In an interview with ACI Africa, the Coordinator of IMBISA Pastoral Department, Fr. Rafael Baciano Sapato, expressed his awareness of the plight of single mothers in Southern Africa and that he had shared his reflections with participants in a consultative session on the ongoing Preparations for the Synod on Synodality.

"I chose the theme 'Church, the family, and the Pastoral Care of single mothers', in response to the question posed in the preparatory document for the Synod 2023," Fr. Sapato told ACI Africa last week referencing the question in the Preparatory Document for the Synod 2023. The Call to Journey Together: What people or groups are, expressly or effectively, left on the side-lines?

The Mozambican Priest expressed his concern about the "tendency to marginalize" single mothers in the countries of IMBISA, which comprise Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Sao Tome & Principe, South Africa, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe.

"I have had a lot of time to reflect on this truth and I have seen that there is a tendency to marginalize this category because according to society, they are those who have given birth to their child through illicit means, not through marriage," the official of IMBISA told ACI Africa in reference to single mothers.

"In my priestly experience as a Christian, I have seen that single mothers are part of this group of people who were left on the margins, especially in my country," he added during the March 8 interview, moments after he had made his presentation.



Fr. Rafael Baciano Sapato

Single Mothers in Southern Africa part of Synod on Synodality topics

In his presentation shared with ACI Africa, the Coordinator of IMBISA Pastoral Department made reference to Pope John Paul II, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis.

Pope John Paul II condemned discrimination against members of social categories, including that of "single mothers", Fr. Sapato indicated in his presentation, making reference to the November 1981 Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*.

Discrimination against single mothers, the Harare-based IMBISA

official said, "is paradoxical for Church - Family of God and for the church in Africa, with very strong sense of family. It is absurd."

"During his apostolic visit to Cagliari, Italy, in September 2008, Benedict XVI revealed not only that he has in his heart the 'single mothers' but also acknowledged their heroism", Fr. Sapato said in his March 8 presentation.

He went on to cite Pope Emeritus' message "during the Angelus at the Shrine of Our Lady of Bonaria" saying, "Benedict XVI said, 'We ask

...Single Mothers

Mary, Mother of the Incarnate Word and our Mother, to protect all the mothers who, together with their husbands, educate their children in a harmonious family context, and those who, for many reasons, are alone in facing such a difficult task."

Pope Francis, the member of the Clergy of Mozambique's Lichinga Diocese said, has continually defended "acceptance and mercy."

"The pastoral line of Pope Francis is very clear and known to most. From his gestures and documents, Pope Francis defends acceptance and mercy and not the pastoral 'of the customs of faith,'" Fr. Sapato told participants during the March 8 IMBISA session.

For Pope Francis, he added, "There

is no 'single mother', because 'single mother' is not a marital status, so there is only a mother."

The Holy Father, the Catholic Priest continued, "is well known for his 'revolutionary' doctrine of the 'outgoing Church'. An outgoing Church is one that crosses the torrent of Cedron, as Jesus did during his passion, one that comes out of the safe environment, accepts the risk to search for the greater good."

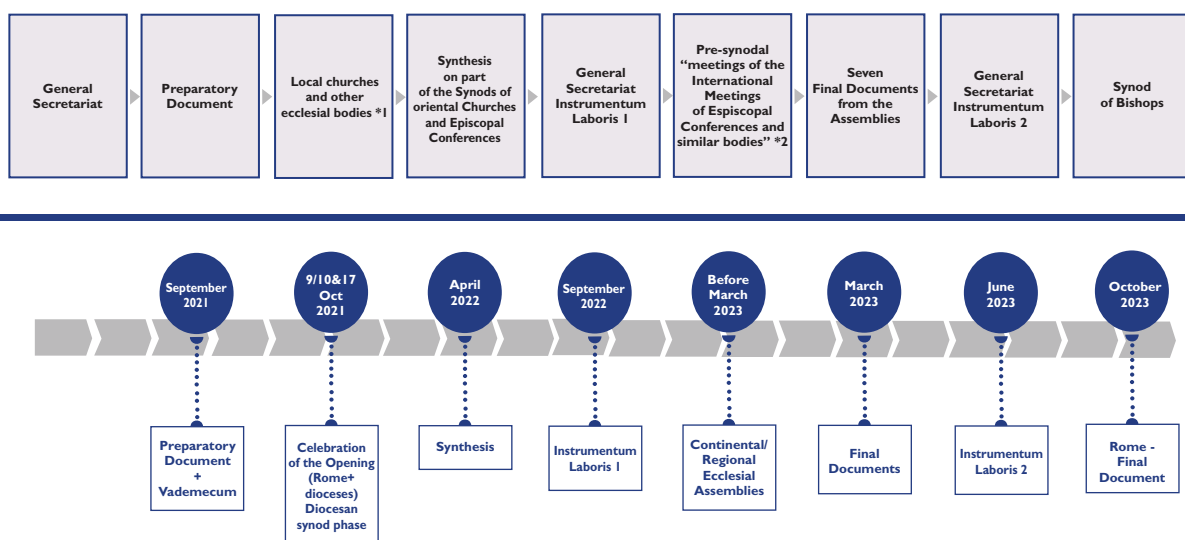
In the March 8 interview with ACI Africa, Fr. Sapato shared about the reaction he received from participants in the IMBISA online session earlier in the day saying, "I was pleasantly surprised with today's reactions, especially from participants from Mozambique who showed their support, and concern regarding the matter."

He added, "One of the participants proposed that Bishops throughout the continent find a common pastoral line to respond to such cases of marginalization."

The Coordinator of IMBISA Pastoral Department continued in reference to the challenges single mothers undergo in South Africa, "The overall sentiment is to overcome this phenomenon."

"It is necessary to re-address the pastoral attitude that some Christian communities take towards 'single mothers', because (it) is not aligned with the theological vision of the Church as Family; it's important that we put Pope Francis words of 'welcoming' into action", Fr. Sapato told ACI Africa

FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION AND MISSION XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS



*1 Dicasteries, Consecrated Life (USG-USG, UNIONS & FEDERATIONS), Associations of Faithful Institutions of Higher Education
*2 Africa (SECAM), Oceania (FCBCO), Asia (FABC), Middle East (CPCO), Europa (CCEE), Latin America (CELAM), North America (USCCB+CCCB)



Africa's Participation in Synodal Process “Very Promising”

6 In this synodal process the contribution of Africa is very promising. There is no doubt that the subject of this consultation is the people of God, of the whole people of God; no one is excluded - **Cardinal Grech**

By Jude Atemanke (ACI Africa).

The contribution of the people of God in Africa in the Ongoing preparations for the Synod on Synodality is “very promising,” a Vatican Cardinal has told participants at a virtual event.

Addressing participants during the webinar, which the the Symposium of the Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) organized, the Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops said the participation of local churches is fundamental for the success of the present synod.

“In this synodal process the contribution of Africa is very promising,” Mario Cardinal Grech said, and added, “There is no doubt that the subject of this consultation is the people of God, of the whole people of God; no one is excluded.”

Cardinal Grech emphasized the need to have all the people of God involved in the synodal process saying, “If a Diocese or a particular group or religious institute decide for some reason or another not to participate, we will be missing a lot.”

The contribution of the people of God in Africa “can bring a solid contribution to the whole church,” the Maltese-born Cardinal said during the SECAM webinar, and appealed, “Please try to do your best to involve the particular churches in every Diocese, every parish and every community to participate.”

“We cannot permit to miss such great gifts that the Holy Spirit has really enriched the Church in Africa,” Cardinal Grech said, reiterating the need to get all the people of God involved in the synodal process.

The Catholic Church leader who was appointed Secretary General of the

Synod of Bishops in September 2020 continued, "If all participate in the consultation in the particular churches, sharing the experience of listening to each other, not only will all the people of God have been consulted but all will learn from each other."

In a statement announcing the webinar that was organized under the theme, "The Church in Africa on the Synodal Path: Living Synodality in Local Churches," SECAM leadership says the focus of the synodal process "is on how the Holy Spirit is inviting local Churches to journey together."

"The People of God are being invited to embrace the spirit of dialogue, participation, and co-responsibility so as to discern together how God is calling the Church to be in the third millennium," SECAM officials say in the three-page statement that included the program of the webinar shared with ACI Africa ahead of the March 30 session.

Reflecting on the focus of the Synod on Synodality during the webinar, Cardinal Grech said, "In this Synod, we are not invited to find a solution for the various difficulties and challenges that we encounter in our pastoral and social experience." He explained in reference to the theme of the Synod, "A synodal Church, communion participation and the mission means what the spirit is asking from us all to have a more synodal Church so that we

can all implement a synodal style in our Parishes, Dioceses and communities."

"This synod offers the opportunity for the local churches to voice their concerns. It is a time to let everybody, the liberal and the conservative to speak frankly, openly and air their concerns," the 65-year-old Catholic Church leader who was elevated to Cardinal in November 2020 said.

The synodal process, he continued, "is really a privileged time and space in which the inner voice of the Church is allowed to speak; a time and space in which the Holy Spirit is allowed to speak through the different organs of the Church." The member of the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian Unity further said, "It is time for the polyphony that constitutes the Church to be played and please don't be surprised if there are some false doubts along the way."

"I speak of false notes because I recognize and acknowledge the fact that this synodal process is not an easy one. It is not exempt from mistakes, human weaknesses, misinterpretations and maybe confusions," he said. Cardinal Grech told participants during the March 30 SECAM webinar to remember that even our Lord "was misinterpreted; His actions, his good deeds at times, created confusion and his deeds were mistaken for acts of the devil." The synodal process is also "a time

for silence," the Maltese-born Cardinal said, and explained, "The synodal process is not only a time to speak, but a time for silence. Our speaking about the issues of the Church needs to be accompanied by a time of silence, a time of discernment, a time to make sense of what must have been said."

"The synod is also a time for the Pope, the Bishop sent the Church to meditate on what was heard and to find together the path forward," he further said.

The Cardinal continued, "To keep silent when one is supposed to speak could be diabolic. But to keep silent after having had time to speak is divine and only the silence that comes with the time to speak will help reduce mistakes, incomprehension and confusion." He said the ongoing synodal process is the "antidote to clericalism" and explained,

"If we really manage to appreciate every baptized and recognize his rights and her rights and duties, we will try to work together hand in hand, respecting the individual charisms and ministries in the ecclesial community."

"There is no flock without a shepherd be it a Diocese or a Parish. But again, there is no shepherd without a flock, so we really have to overcome this gap. I think this is fundamental for this present in synodal experience," Cardinal Grech said during the March 30 SECAM webinar.



...Advocate for Adoption of African Values

which the scholars said seem to have been forgotten.

In an interview with ACI Africa on the sidelines of the event that was organized in collaboration with the Association of Member Episcopal Conference in Eastern Africa (AMECEA), Sr. Veronica Rop, a lecturer at the Kenya-based Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) said that the Synodal process should be anchored in Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter on the environment, *Laudato Si*, and in "listening to the wisdom of our ancestors."

"We need to interrogate our African culture and listen to the wisdom of our ancestors. We need to be guided by the relatedness of the *Laudato Si*, which guided Africans," the Kenyan theologian said, and explained, "Africans always believed that they were each other's relatives and they lived in solidarity with each other, caring for the unborn, the living and the living-dead. They also cared deeply about the environment. These are the values we need to think about."

She added, "There is a need to reclaim and share our Africa values

of communitarian relationship, hospitality, respect for family and human life especially the young and old and relatedness with all of creation. We need reference to God and to our ancestors."

The member of the Assumption Sisters of Eldoret (ASE) highlighted the need to revive the culture of barazas (traditional African public meetings) and to allow everyone to have a voice in such meetings.

"We need to sit together in barazas and to discuss our issues. We however need to critique who sits and speaks in such meetings. Voices of those who feel marginalized, those who are actually marginalized, including women, the youth and our mother earth need to be amplified," Sr. Veronica said.

The three-day colloquium brought together theologians from across Africa who explored the element of listening to the Synod on Synodality process from an African perspective. From the Vatican Theological Commission of the Synod, Sr. Anne Béatrice Faye from Burkina Faso and Fr. Nicholas Segeja M'hela from Tanzania also participated in the theological colloquium. Also invited to participate were Sr. Leonida Katunge, an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya and Ms. Noluthando Honono, a student at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa.

Sr. Béatrice who had participated in

the drafting of the Synod on Synodality Preparatory document said that her role had been to suggest ways to enrich the document.

She expressed enthusiasm that her suggestions had been factored in the drafting of the document, saying, "We proposed that the Synod on Synodality acknowledges ecumenism and the diverse cultures of Africa. We are happy that these factors were largely captured in the document."

In an interview with ACI Africa on the sidelines of the event, Fr. Segeja who serves as the Director of CUEA's Gaba campus in the Kenyan town of Eldoret said that the journey of the Synod on Synodality is an opportunity to rethink the diverse African values.

The member of the Clergy of Tanzania's Catholic Diocese of Mwanza who also serves at the Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops underscored the need to isolate helpful African cultures from retrogressive ones.

"Solidity implies illuminating the dark parts of our cultures. We need to critically look at what is happening around us, to promote what is useful and to leave out what is not. The Word of God will guide us in this process. The teachings of the Church and the wisdom of other people will help us in this discernment,".

