

SYNODAL IMPLEMENTATION PREPARATORY REGIONAL ASSEMBLIES

A SUMMARY REPORT

Compiled by the National Synod Team



A. Summary of the Regional Consultations from the National Capital Region, Southern, Northern, Central Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao, and Sectors/Commissions

1. New Programs, Processes, and Structures Due to Synodality

- a. **Institutional Structures:** Dioceses established Synodal Teams to ensure co-responsibility, with many forming consultative bodies for clergy, laity, and marginalized sectors. Visayas and Mindanao integrated synodal values into pastoral plans and councils.
 - b. **Spiritual Conversations:** “Conversations in the Spirit” became standard in diocesan assemblies, seminaries, and parish activities, promoting listening, discernment, and spiritual communion.
 - c. **Lay and Marginalized Sector Empowerment:** Ministries for youth, PWDs, IPs, LGBTQ+, and others were created or strengthened, affirming their inclusion and participation in the Church's mission.
 - d. **Revival of BECs:** Basic Ecclesial Communities were revitalized as synodal grassroots structures, particularly in rural and mission areas.
 - e. **Digital Engagement:** Online tools and mission stations allowed broader participation in synodal consultations, catechesis, and pastoral governance.
 - f. **Clergy Renewal:** Ongoing clergy formation; integrated synodal spirituality, encouraging servant leadership, and breaking clericalism.
 - g. **Integration with Existing Programs:** Synodality was infused into existing initiatives—ecology, social justice, and popular religiosity—ensuring continuity and local contextualization.
 - h. **Ecological and Justice Missions:** New projects linking ecology, peace, and synodality express a faith rooted in action.
 - i. **Synodal Education:** Seminaries, Catholic schools, parish organizations, and formation houses began adopting synodal pedagogy and values.
 - j. **Media and Communication:** SoCom offices produced educational materials and promoted transparency through digital catechesis.
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2. Challenges and Difficulties in Implementing Synodality

- a. **Clericalism and Resistance to Change:** Some clergy and lay leaders resisted co-responsibility and synodal leadership, preferring status quo models (*natatakot sa pagbabago at sa dagdag na trabaho*).
- b. **Inconsistent Practice of Synodality:** Many efforts lacked continuity, with some dioceses experiencing **tokenism** (a superficial and symbolic effort to be inclusive and diverse, often involving the inclusion of a small group of people from marginalized communities solely for optics), low participation, or confusion about synodal processes.
- c. **Weak BECs and Grassroots Engagement:** Due to socioeconomic demands and weak formation, BECs and local participation were inconsistent.

- d. **Formation Gaps:** Clergy, laity, and pastoral leaders lacked adequate training in synodal spirituality and collaborative leadership.
 - e. **Structural Limitations and Leadership Transitions:** *Sede vacante* or new parish assignments, changing priorities, or disengaged bishops and parish priests affected continuity.
 - f. **Financial and Human Resource Constraints:** Dioceses struggled with limited funding and a shortage of trained personnel for long-term synodal activities.
 - g. **Cultural and Geographical Challenges:** Remote locations hindered unified implementation.
 - h. **Superficial Inclusion:** Engagement with marginalized sectors often remained symbolic, lacking deeper follow-through or empowerment.
 - i. **Monitoring and Evaluation Deficits:** Lack of clear benchmarks, feedback systems, and accountability mechanisms limited long-term tracking.
 - j. **Broader Disruptions:** Natural calamities and societal challenges (poverty, mental health, politics) disrupted synodal initiatives.
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3. Emerging Questions

- a. **How to Reach and Empower the Marginalized?** Practical strategies are needed to include those who are excluded or disengaged authentically.
- b. **What Frameworks Support Parish-Level Synodality?** Grassroots synodal teams require support, training, and proper structures.
- c. **How Do We Foster Accountability?** Metrics for evaluating synodal effectiveness and follow-through remain unclear.
- d. **How to Deepen Spiritual and Personal Conversion?** Synodality demands a spirituality of humility, listening, and transformation—especially among clergy.
- e. **How to Form Youth for Synodality?** Youth involvement requires formative, participative, and missionary programs in schools and parishes.
- f. **How Much Can Laity Be Involved in Governance?** Questions on co-responsibility and shared leadership remain pressing.
- g. **How Can Synodality Be Sustained Post-Synod?** Structures, institutionalization, and leadership support are key to ensuring longevity.
- h. **How to Engage the Digital Realm?** Cyber-evangelization and online synodal processes must be strengthened and expanded.
- i. **What Is the Vision Moving Forward?** There is a desire for a clear, bold ecclesial direction that leads to a missionary and inclusive Church.
- j. **How Should Governance Be Reformed?** Existing power dynamics may need to be transformed to accommodate synodal ideals.

4. What Can Be Done After the Synod on Synodality

- a. **Institutionalize Synodal Governance:** Embed synodal structures in diocesan and parish structures with strategic plans from a national framework.

- b. **Expand Formation Programs:** Implement nationwide modules in seminaries, parishes, and ecclesial institutions to build a synodal mindset.
- c. **Create Monitoring and Feedback Systems:** Establish national and diocesan bodies to ensure follow-up, learning, and accountability.
- d. **Foster Lay Leadership and Ministries:** Develop programs and structures that affirm laypeople's leadership in pastoral and governance roles.
- e. **Deepen Youth Engagement:** Empower young people with leadership opportunities and integrate synodal values in youth formation.
- f. **Revive and Strengthen BECs:** Continue to support grassroots faith communities as key agents of synodal life.
- g. **Encourage Digital and Inclusive Participation:** Utilize technology to promote broader engagement and connect with marginalized communities.
- h. **Support Clergy Formation:** Help clergy embrace synodality as a call to serve with humility and shared leadership.
- i. **Celebrate Best Practices:** Promote national sharing and networking to build momentum and model success.
- j. **Anchor Synodality in Spirituality:** Encourage daily practices of prayer, discernment, and communal listening.

5. Conversation in the Spirit: How Synodality Can Shape the Post-Synodal Church

- a. **Conversion of Hearts and Structures:** A reorientation toward humility, openness, and authentic service is essential for institutional reform.
- b. **Listening and Dialogue as Prayer:** Deep listening must become a spiritual practice that guides decisions and builds community.
- c. **Inclusive Co-Responsibility:** Recognize the equal dignity and participation rights of all the baptized in shaping the Church's future.
- d. **Renewed Leadership Models:** Shift from top-down clericalism to collaborative, servant leadership deeply rooted in community.
- e. **Culture of Synodality:** Synodality must be lived as a daily ecclesial habit, not just an episodic event.
- f. **Strengthening the Domestic Church and BECs:** Homes and local communities must be empowered to embody and carry forward the synodal journey.
- g. **Formation of Future Leaders:** Seminaries and youth programs must cultivate a generation of leaders shaped by synodal spirituality.
- h. **Permanent Structures for Discernment and Feedback:** Conversations in the Spirit and similar practices should be built into Church life.
- i. **Mission to the Margins:** The Preferential Option for the Poor must define synodal engagement and decision-making.
- j. **Embracing Filipino Synodal Spirituality:** The values of *Bayanihan* (community), *Bayani* (mission), and *Ani* (fruitfulness) offer a local lens for living synodality meaningfully

B. Elements of a Synodal Church

From the fruits of the regional assembly discernment process, the following essential elements are necessary for a more synodal Philippine Church:

1. LISTENING, DISCERNMENT & ACCOMPANIMENT

Ecclesial discernment is a spiritual practice grounded in a living faith, that seeks to recognise together “what the Spirit is saying to the Churches” (Rev 2:7). ...It is essential that we promote the broadest participation possible in the discernment process, particularly involving those who are at the margins of the Christian community and society. (FD 82)

“To be truly synodal, the Church must establish channels for listening and dialogue, and strengthen structures of co-responsibility and collaboration.” (BD part III & IV)

Convergences:

- a. **Emphasis on Listening and Dialogue:** This includes advocating for "open and dialogical platforms for engagements" , cultivating "sensitive listening" , promoting "going to the people, listen to their stories" , establishing a "culture of dialogue/openness at a parish level" , and encouraging "deep listening as an act of love" and "listening to the voices of those in the peripheries". \
- b. **Importance of Discernment:** The document mentions a need for "more processes and discernment opportunities like conversation in the spirit" , the continuous practice of "discerning together" , the establishment of "Platforms for discernment" , and viewing "Discernment as a way of life".
- c. **Accompaniment as a Core Practice:** "Journeying together" , a call to "Lead Through Accompaniment" , and the importance of "grassroots accompaniment—especially for families, youth, and the marginalized". Specific instances include providing "accompaniment to the young people: spiritual, emotional, psychological" , "Accompanying the youth, that starts in the family, to the church, in the ministry and to the community" , and "Family accompaniment of the clergy, religious and the laity".
- d. **Formation for Synodality:** "Synodal Formation for both the Clergy and the laity" , "Ongoing formation in synodality" , a "formation program on synodality" , "human formation for mature and mutual listening; spiritual formation for discernment" , and "formation rooted in communion and mission".
- e. **Inclusivity and Participation:** "Openness to participation and inclusivity" , "more inclusive, open and dialogical platforms for engagements" , "expanding to inclusivity" , and the need to "Create Cultures of Courageous Listening" and "Rewire the System for Inclusion".

Matters for Consideration

- a. **Developing Deeper and Broader Listening Structures:** There is a need to establish and strengthen "open and dialogical platforms" to facilitate "sensitive listening" that extends to "going to the people, listen to their stories," and importantly, to "listen to the voices of those in the peripheries."
- b. **Implementing Comprehensive Formation in Synodality:** This formation should be "Ongoing formation in synodality" and encompass "human formation for mature and mutual listening" as well as "spiritual formation for discernment," ensuring that all members are equipped with the necessary skills and spiritual grounding for these processes.
- c. **Integrating Discernment as a Way of Life:** The document highlights the importance of creating "more processes and discernment opportunities like conversation in the spirit" and moving towards "Discernment as a way of life."
- d. **Strengthening Grassroots Accompaniment for Specific Groups:** A key area for consideration is the emphasis on "grassroots accompaniment—especially for families, youth, and the marginalized."
- e. **Fostering Openness and Overcoming Resistance to Change:** The document points to the challenge of addressing a "non-synodal mindset": "Conversion of the hearts and ears po talaga!"

Proposal for Action

- a. Establish and Enhance Inclusive Platforms for Dialogue and Listening
- b. Implement Comprehensive Formation in Synodality
- c. Integrate "Conversations in the Spirit" and Communal Discernment
- d. Strengthen Grassroots Accompaniment Programs
- e. Cultivate a Culture of Openness and Conversion

2. FORMATION FOR CONVERSION AND MISSION

The synodal process has renewed the awareness that listening is an essential component of every aspect of the Church's life: administering sacraments, in particular that of Reconciliation, catechesis, formation, and pastoral accompaniment. (FD 78)

"Formation in synodality must be systematic, inclusive, and adapted to local realities... not limited to the clergy but extended to the entire People of God." (BD 3)

Convergences

- a. **Human Formation for Mature and Mutual Listening:** This element focuses on developing the personal attributes and skills necessary for effective and empathetic communication, which is foundational for both personal conversion and collaborative mission work.

- b. **Spiritual Formation for Discernment:** nurturing an individual's spiritual life, enabling them to discern God's will and promptings, crucial for genuine conversion and for navigating the complexities of mission.
- c. **Formation of the Heart (Beyond Intellectual Understanding):** The formation for conversion and mission requires a deep internal transformation, fostering a "Missionary with a heart" who is driven by love and compassion.
- d. **Formation Rooted in Communion and Mission:** The purpose of formation is to equip individuals to live in deep relationship with God and one another (communion) and to actively participate in spreading the Gospel (mission).
- e. **Ongoing Synodal Formation for Both Clergy and Laity:** "Ongoing formation in synodality" that is constantly undergoing conversion for its mission. This also extends to "Formation in the parish level."

Matters for Consideration

- 1) **Holistic Formation Encompassing Mind and Heart:** A critical consideration is ensuring that formation programs move beyond mere intellectual understanding to include the "formation of the heart as well." This aims to cultivate a "Missionary with a heart," signifying that true conversion and mission require a transformation of one's inner disposition, values, and affections, not just knowledge.
- 2) **Continuous and Universal Scope of Formation:** continuous process, not a one-off event, and accessible at all levels, including "Formation in the parish level," to foster a pervasive culture of conversion and missionary zeal.
- 3) **Integration of Conversion into Daily Life and Church Processes:** "Daily conversion and strong determination" but also a transformation of "hearts, relationship, processes and bonds."
- 4) **Ensuring Organizational Structure and Leadership Motivation for Formation:** "Magkaroon ng organized structure para mas maging consistent ang programa at hindi mabalewala sa paraang motivated ang clergy at mga coordinators."
- 5) **Balancing Human and Spiritual Dimensions in Formation:** formation should address both "human formation for mature and mutual listening" and "spiritual formation for discernment."

Proposal for Action:

- 1) Establish and Implement Comprehensive Synodal Formation Programs
- 2) Develop Formation Initiatives Focusing on "Formation of the Heart"
- 3) Integrate Human and Spiritual Formation for Enhanced Listening and Discernment
- 4) Create Organized Structures and Support Systems for Formation Programs
- 5) Foster a Culture of Continuous Personal and Communal Conversion

3. ACCOUNTABLE AND COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

In the synodal Church, “the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on taking pastoral decisions” (ITC 68) for mission. (FD 87)

“Synodality must be lived at all levels of Church life... from families, small Christian communities, parishes, dioceses, and bishops’ conferences to continental and global levels.” (BD 4)

Convergences

- a. **Shift Towards Inclusive and Participatory Governance:** "Building synodal structures at regional, sub regional, diocesan levels" and a desire to "Encourage higher participation of the lay in decision making and planning," indicating a move towards a more collaborative and broad-based governance model.
- b. **Emphasis on Synodal, Not Self-Oriented, Leadership:** Leadership within the Church should be communal, shared, and rooted in shared discernment, moving away from individualistic or authoritarian approaches.
- c. **Call for Organized and Consistent Structures with Accountability:** The need for "organized structure para mas maging consistent ang programa at hindi mabalewala." This implies a desire for clear, reliable governance structures that ensure programs are sustained and that clergy and coordinators are motivated, reflecting an underlying need for accountability and transparency.
- d. **Recognition of the Importance of Formation for Synodal Leaders:** A shared belief that effective, collaborative, and accountable leadership requires continuous formation for all involved, equipping them with the necessary skills and mindset to operate within a synodal governance structure.
- e. **Advocacy for Leadership Rooted in Self-Awareness and Service:** Leadership should stem from a profound "pagkilala ng tao sa kanyang sarili mismo," emphasizing that "bago maging leader dapat ang leadership ay nagmumula sayo as a person."

Matters for Consideration

- a. **Resistance to Synodal Mindsets and Openness:** Needing to "Find openings for dialogue in the non-synodal mindset" and emphasizing the necessity of "acceptance so that change will happen,"
- b. **Lack of Consistent Organizational Structures and Motivation:** Inconsistent and uncoordinated structure, lack of motivation among leaders and coordinators, leading to programs not being sustained or taken seriously.

- c. **Insufficient Lay Participation in Decision-Making:** Current governance mechanisms may not adequately facilitate or incorporate the active involvement of the laity in collaborative decision-making processes.
- d. **Practical Implementation of "Synodal, Not Self-Oriented, Leadership":** Shifting from traditional hierarchical models to a genuinely collaborative and discerning leadership requires profound changes in culture and behavior, posing a challenge to established norms.
- e. **Translating "Conversion" into Tangible Accountability:** There's a potential divergence between the aspirational transformation of relationships and the practical mechanisms needed to ensure transparent and accountable leadership practices.

Proposal for Action

- a. Build Synodal Structures at All Levels
- b. Provide More Structures for Lay Participation
- c. Implement Organized Structures for Program Consistency and Motivation
- d. Undertake Synodal Formation for Clergy and Laity
- e. Foster a Culture of Openness and Dialogue

4. INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION—BECS, GRASSROOTS, MARGINALIZED SECTORS

"The communion of communities, which can be experienced in the Basic Ecclesial Communities (and other forms of communal living), provides a natural locus for many of the fruits of synodality to take root and sprout for the growth of the churches in Asia." (FD 10)

They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. They are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, as Christians are to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition." (BD 87)

Convergences

- a. **Desire for Open and Dialogical Platforms:** shared aspiration to create accessible spaces and processes where all members can contribute and communicate freely.
- b. **Increased Lay Participation in Decision-Making:** shared commitment to empowering lay faithful in governance.
- c. **Commitment to Reaching Out and Including the Marginalized:** shared desire to ensure that the Church actively embraces and includes those on the margins.
- d. **Foundational Role of a Culture of Listening:** True inclusion begins with a deep commitment to hearing all voices.
- e. **Synodal Formation as a Catalyst for Participation:** Prepare all members to understand, embrace, and actively contribute to the participatory nature of a synodal Church.

Matters for Consideration

- a. **Overcoming Resistance and "Non-Synodal" Mindsets:** the challenge of fostering genuine openness to new, more participatory ways of being Church.
- b. **Bridging the Gap in Lay Participation in Decision-Making:** A divergence between the aspiration for increased lay involvement and the current reality, where adequate formal mechanisms for such participation might be lacking or insufficient.
- c. **Ensuring Comprehensive Inclusivity, Especially for the Marginalized:** The practical challenge of effectively reaching out to and integrating all marginalized groups, suggesting a potential divergence between the ideal of universal inclusivity and current operational limitations.
- d. **Building a "Culture of Courageous Listening":** overcoming potential barriers to honest expression and genuine reception of diverse voices, indicating a possible divergence from existing listening practices.
- e. **Translating "Conversion of Hearts" into Inclusive Practices:** simply creating new structures might not suffice; a fundamental shift in individual and communal attitudes is necessary for inclusivity to truly flourish, potentially revealing a divergence where such profound conversion is still ongoing.

Proposal for Action

- a. Provide More Structures for Lay Participation in Decision-Making
- b. Create Inclusive and Dialogical Platforms for Engagement
- c. Build Synodal Structures at All Levels
- d. Foster a Culture of Courageous and Deep Listening
- e. Implement Ongoing Synodal Formation for Clergy and Laity

5. PARTNERSHIP AND OUTREACH

"We also need to go out to the peripheries, beyond the physical boundaries of the Church, where many do not know Jesus and the Good News yet." (FD 22)

We will work with all people of goodwill towards fostering a better and a more humane world, towards building a civilization of justice, peace and love. Our mission is to contribute to a better Asia, to work for a better world. (BD 162)

Convergences

- a. **Dialogue and Collaboration with Other Faiths at the Grassroots:** shared commitment to interfaith and ecumenical engagement at a foundational level.

- b. **Strengthening Lay Empowerment for Mission:** shared understanding that the laity are crucial agents in the Church's mission and outreach efforts, fostering a partnership between clergy and lay faithful in evangelical endeavors.
- c. **Consultation and Coordination with External Organizations** shared commitment to building partnerships and conducting outreach with various external societal bodies beyond traditional Church structures.
- d. **Focus on the Peripheries and Marginalized in Outreach:** Prioritizing outreach efforts towards those on the margins, with phrases like "listening to the voices of those in the peripheries" and advocating for "grassroots accompaniment—especially for families, youth, and the marginalized."
- e. **Internal Formation for an Outward-Bound, Missionary Church:** "formation rooted in communion and mission," suggesting that the Church's internal life is geared towards external engagement and partnership.

Matters for Consideration

- a. **Bridging the Gap in Grassroots Interreligious and Ecumenical Dialogue:** divergence between the aspiration for widespread grassroots dialogue and the current extent of its practice.
- b. **Establishing Effective Coordination Mechanisms with External Bodies:** the complexity of creating and sustaining structured partnerships with diverse external organizations, implying a potential divergence from current, possibly ad-hoc, coordination efforts.
- c. **Ensuring Comprehensive Outreach and Accompaniment for All Peripheries:** potential divergence between the ideal of universal outreach and the practical limitations or scope of current initiatives.
- d. **Translating "Missionary with a Heart" into Widespread Action:** divergence between the desire for an outward-bound Church and the actual, consistent engagement of the entire community in mission.
- e. **Fully Actualizing Lay Empowerment and Utilizing Lay Mission Partners:** divergence where the full potential of lay involvement in mission is not yet consistently realized or leveraged.

Proposal for Action

- a. Establish and Conduct Grassroots Dialogue with Other Faiths
- b. Develop and Implement a Coordination System with External Organizations
- c. Strengthen Lay Empowerment and Mobilize Lay Mission Partners
- d. Systematically Reach Out to and Accompany Those in the Peripheries
- e. Develop Formation Programs to Cultivate a Missionary Heart