

Consecrated Life in the Synod Final Document

Extracts from the Final Document of the Synod on Synodality mentioning Consecrated Life

8. Study Groups on Various Themes

The first Session of the Assembly has yielded other results. The Synthesis Report drew attention to key themes of great importance for the life of the Church. The Holy Father, at the end of an international consultation, entrusted these themes to Study Groups made up of pastors and experts from all continents, who were asked to work using a synodal methodology. The areas of the life and mission of the Church that they have already begun to study in depth are the following:

1. Some aspects of the relationship between the Eastern Catholic Churches and the Latin Church.
2. Listening to the cry of the poor and the earth.
3. The mission in the digital environment.
4. The revision of the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* in a missionary synodal perspective.
5. Some theological and canonical matters regarding specific ministerial forms.
6. **The revision, in a synodal missionary perspective, of the documents touching on the relationship between Bishops, consecrated life, and ecclesial associations.**
7. Some aspects of the person and ministry of the Bishop (in particular: criteria for selecting candidates to the episcopacy, the judicial function of the Bishops, the nature and structure of *ad limina* Apostolorum visits) from a missionary synodal perspective.
8. The role of Pontifical Representatives in a missionary synodal perspective.
9. Theological criteria and synodal methodologies for shared discernment of controversial doctrinal, pastoral, and ethical issues.
10. The reception of the fruits of the ecumenical journey in the People of God.

Furthermore, in agreement with the Dicastery for Legislative Texts, a Canonical Commission has been established to work on innovations needed regarding ecclesial norms. In addition, discernment concerning the pastoral accompaniment of people in polygamous marriages has been entrusted to the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar. The work of these groups and commissions has marked the beginning of the implementation stage, has enriched the work of the Second Session, and will assist the Holy Father in pastoral and governance decisions.

9. Implementation Phase

The synodal process does not conclude with the end of the current Assembly of the Synod of Bishops but also includes the implementation phase. As members of the Assembly and as synodal missionaries within the communities from which we come, we feel it is our responsibility to promote this process. **The local Churches are asked to continue their daily journey with a synodal methodology of consultation and discernment, identifying concrete ways and formation pathways to bring about a tangible synodal conversion in the various ecclesial contexts (parishes, Institutes of consecrated life and Societies of apostolic life, movements of the faithful, dioceses, Episcopal Conferences, groupings of Churches, etc.).** Planning for an evaluation of the progress made in terms of synodality and the participation of all the Baptised in the life of the Church should also occur. We suggest to the Episcopal Conferences and Synods of the Churches *sui iuris* to allocate personnel and resources to accompany the pathway of growth as a synodal Church in mission and to maintain contact with the General Secretariat of the Synod (cf. EC 19 § 1 and 2). We ask the Secretariat to continue to watch over the synodal quality of the working method of the Study Groups.

52. Relations Between Men and Women

The need for conversion certainly concerns the relations between men and women. The dynamics of relationships is inscribed upon our condition as creatures. The difference between the sexes constitutes the basis of human relationships. "So God created humankind in his image [...] male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). Inequality between men and women is not part of God's design. In the new creation, this difference is reconsidered in the light of the dignity of Baptism: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:27-28). Our vocation as Christians is to welcome and respect, in every place and context, this difference, which is a gift from God and a source of life. **We bear witness to the Gospel when we seek to live in relationships that respect the equal dignity and reciprocity between men and women. The widely expressed pain and suffering on the part of many women from every region and continent, both lay and consecrated, during the synodal process, reveal how often we fail to do so.**

65. Spiritual Gifts and Consecrated Life

Over the centuries, the Church has also been enriched spiritually by the many different forms of consecrated life. From the very beginning, the Church has recognised the action of the Spirit in men and women who have followed Christ along the path of the evangelical counsels, consecrating themselves to the service of God, whether through contemplation or other forms of service. They are called to interrogate Church and society with their prophetic voice. Across their centuries-long history, the various forms of consecrated life elaborated what we now recognise as practices of synodal living. These include how to practise discernment in common and to harmonise together individual gifts as well as pursue mission in common. Orders and congregations, societies of apostolic life, secular institutes, as well as associations, movements and new communities, all have a special contribution to make to the growth of synodality in the Church. Today, many communities of consecrated life are like laboratories for intercultural living in a way that is prophetic for both the Church and the world. At the same time, synodality invites - and sometimes challenges - pastors of local Churches, as well as those responsible for leadership in consecrated life and in the movements, to strengthen relationships in order to bring to life an exchange of gifts at the service of the common mission.

72. With the Bishop: Priests and Deacons

In a synodal Church, Priests are called to live their service in a spirit of proximity to their people, to be welcoming and prepared to listen to all, opening themselves up to a synodal style. Priests "constitute along with their Bishop one presbyterium" (LG 28) and collaborate with him in discerning charisms and in accompanying and guiding the local Church with particular regard to the matter of safeguarding unity. They are called to live in solidarity with their brother Priests and to collaborate in providing pastorally for their people. **Priests who belong to religious orders and congregations enrich the presbyterium with the uniqueness of their charism.** These, along with Priests who come from Eastern Churches sui iuris, be they celibate or married, the fidei donum Priests, and those who come from other countries, assist the local clergy in opening themselves to a whole Church perspective. In turn, local Priests help clergy from elsewhere to become part of the history of a concrete diocese with its distinctive spiritual richness and traditions. In this way, the presbyterium, too, experiences a genuine exchange of gifts in the service of the Church's mission. Priests also need to be accompanied and supported, especially in the early stages of their ministry as well as at times of weakness and fragility.

77. Greater Opportunities for Participation

The lay faithful, both men and women, should be given greater opportunities for participation, also exploring new forms of service and ministry in response to the pastoral needs of our time in a spirit of collaboration and differentiated co-responsibility. In particular, some concrete needs have emerged from the synodal process. These ought to be responded to according to the various contexts:

- a) increased participation of laymen and laywomen in Church discernment processes and all phases of decision-making processes (drafting, making and confirming decisions);
 - b) greater access of laymen and laywomen to positions of responsibility in dioceses and ecclesiastical institutions, including seminaries, theological institutes and faculties, more fully enacting existing provisions;
 - c) greater recognition and support for the lives and charisms of consecrated men and women and their employment in positions of ecclesial responsibility;**
 - d) a greater number of qualified lay people serving as judges in all canonical processes;
 - e) effective recognition of the dignity and respect for the rights of those who are employed in the Church and its institutions.
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99. Accountability and Evaluation

If the synodal Church wants to be welcoming, then the culture and praxis of accountability must shape its actions at all levels. However, those in positions of authority have greater responsibility in this regard and are called to account for it to God and to His People. **While accountability to one's superiors has been practised over the centuries, the dimension of authority's being accountable to the community is in need of restoration. The structures and procedures established through the experience of consecrated life (such as chapters, canonical visitations, etc.) can serve as an inspiration in this regard.**

118. Institutes and Associations in Mission

We recognise that institutes of consecrated life, societies of apostolic life, as well as associations, movements and new communities, have the ability to take root locally and, at the same time, connect different places and milieus, often at a national or international level. Their action, together with that of many individuals and informal groups, often brings the Gospel to highly diverse contexts: to hospitals, prisons, homes for the elderly, reception centres for migrants, minors, those marginalised and victims of violence; to centres of education and training, schools and universities where young people and families meet; to the arenas of culture and politics and of integral human development, where new forms of living together are imagined and constructed. We look with gratitude also to monasteries, which are places of gathering and discernment and speak of a "beyond" that concerns the whole Church and directs its path. It is the particular responsibility of the Bishop or Eparch to animate these diverse bodies and to nurture the bonds of unity. **Institutes and associations are called to act in synergy with the local Church, participating in the dynamism of synodality.**

143. Integral and Shared Formation

One of the requests that emerged most strongly and from all contexts during the synodal process is that the formation provided by the Christian community be integral, ongoing and shared. Such formation must aim not only at acquiring theoretical knowledge but also at promoting the capacity for openness and encounter, sharing and collaboration, reflection and discernment in common. Formation must consequently engage all the dimensions of the human person (intellectual, affective, relational and spiritual) and include concrete experiences that are appropriately accompanied. **There was also a marked insistence throughout the synodal process upon the need for a common and shared formation, in which men and women, laity, consecrated persons, ordained ministers and candidates for ordained ministry participate together, thus enabling them to grow together in knowledge and mutual esteem and in the ability to collaborate.** This requires the presence of suitable and competent formators, capable of demonstrating with their lives what they transmit with their words. Only in this way will formation be truly generative and transformative. Nor should we overlook the contribution that the pedagogical disciplines can make to providing well-focused formation, adult learning and teaching methods and the accompaniment of individuals and communities. We, therefore, need to invest in the formation of formators.

144. Places and Resources for Formation

The Church already has many places and resources for the formation of missionary disciples: families, small communities, parishes, ecclesial associations, seminaries and religious communities, academic institutions, and also places for serving and working with the marginalised, as well as missionary and volunteer initiatives. In each of these areas, the community expresses its capacity to educate in discipleship and to accompany through witness. This encounter often brings together people of different generations, from the youngest to the oldest. In the Church, no one simply receives formation: everyone is an active subject and has something to give to others. Popular piety, too, is a precious treasure of the Church, which teaches the whole People of God on the journey.