

# ARCHDIOCESE OF NAIROBI

INPUT ON THE DIOCESAN SYNODAL PHASE 2021 -  
2022

---

# What is a synod?

• **Synod** - is an ancient and venerable word in the Tradition of the Church, whose meaning draws on the deepest themes of Revelation [...] *It indicates the path along which the People of God walk together. It's all about journeying together.* Equally, it refers to the Lord Jesus, who presents Himself as 'the way, the truth and the life' (Jn 14: 6), and to the fact that Christians, His followers, were originally called 'followers of the Way' (cf. Acts 9: 2; 19,9.23; 22,4; 24,14.22).

# What is Synodality?

• *It denotes the particular style that qualifies the life and mission of the Church*, expressing her nature as the People of God journeying together and gathering in assembly, summoned by the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel. Synodality ought to be expressed in the Church's ordinary way of living and working.

# Theme of the Synod:

***For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.***

- The three dimensions of the theme are communion, participation, and mission. These three dimensions are profoundly interrelated. They are the vital pillars of a Synodal Church. There is no hierarchy between them. Rather, each one enriches and orients the other two. There is a dynamic relationship between the three that must be articulated with all three in mind.

## a) Communion:-

By his gracious will, *God gathers us together as diverse peoples of one faith*, through the covenant that he offers to his people. Communion finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity.

## b) Participation:-

*This is a call for the involvement of all who belong to the People of God – laity, consecrated and ordained – to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another. In a Synodal Church the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyze, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will.*

## c) Mission:

*The Church exists to evangelize.* A call to witness to the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. This Synodal Process has a deeply missionary dimension to it. It is intended to enable the Church to better witness to the Gospel, especially with those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential peripheries of our world.

OFFICIAL SYNODAL LOGO PATH



For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission



# Explanation of the logo...

- A large, majestic tree, full of wisdom and light, reaches for the sky. A sign of deep vitality and hope which expresses the cross of Christ. It carries the Eucharist, which shines like the sun. The horizontal branches, opened like hands or wings, suggest, at the same time, the Holy Spirit.
- The people of God are not static: they are on the move, in direct reference to the etymology of the word synod, which means "walking together." The people are united by the same common dynamic that this Tree of Life breathes into them, from which they begin their walk.
- These 15 silhouettes sum up our entire humanity in its diversity of life situations of generations and origins. This aspect is reinforced by the multiplicity of bright colors which are themselves signs of joy. There is no hierarchy between these people who are all on the same footing: young, old, men, women, teenagers, children, lay people, religious, parents, couples, singles; the bishop and the nun are not in front of them, but among them.

# Explanation of the logo...

- Quite naturally, children and the adolescents open their walk, in reference to these words of Jesus in the Gospel: “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children” (**Mt 11:25**).
- The horizontal baseline: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission” runs from left to right in the direction of this march, underlining and strengthening it, to end with the title “Synod 2021 – 2023,” the high point that synthesizes the whole Logo.

# Purpose of the Synod

1. Inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be
2. Make people's hopes flourish
3. Stimulate trust
4. Bind up wounds
5. Weave new and deeper relationships
6. Learn from one another
7. Build bridges
8. Enlighten minds
9. Warm hearts
10. Restore strength to our hands for our common mission.

# Objectives of the Synod

1. **To provide an opportunity** for the entire People of God to discern together how to move forward on the path towards being a more Synodal Church in the long-term.
2. **To listen, as the entire People of God,** to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church. We do so by listening together to the Word of God in Scripture and the living Tradition of the Church, and then by listening to one another, and especially to those at the margins, discerning the signs of the times.
3. **To make pastoral decisions** that reflect the will of God as closely as possible, grounding them in the living voice of the People of God.

# Expectation from the People of God

1. *Pray*
2. *Listen,*
3. *Analyze*
4. *Dialogue*
5. *Discern*
6. *Offer Advice.*

# TEN THEMES TO BE EXPLORED

- In order to help highlight the experiences and contribute in a richer way to the consultation, we indicate below ten thematic nuclei that articulate different facets of “lived synodality.”
- They should be adapted to the different local contexts and, from time to time, integrated, explained, simplified, and deepened, with particular attention paid to those who have more difficulty in participating and responding: The Handbook that accompanies this Preparatory Document offers tools, itineraries, and suggestions so that the different groups of questions can concretely inspire moments of prayer, formation, reflection, and exchange.

# I. The journeying companions

- In the Church and in society, we are side by side on the same road. In your local Church, who are the ones “journeying together”? When we say: “our Church,” who is part of it? Who is asking us to journey together? Who are the road companions, including those outside the ecclesial perimeter? What persons or groups are left on the margins, expressly or in fact?

## 2. Listening

- Listening is the first step, but it requires having an open mind and heart, without prejudices. To whom does our particular Church “need to listen to”? How are the Laity, especially young people and 22 women, listened to? How do we integrate the contribution of Consecrated Men and Women? What space is there for the voice of minorities, the discarded, and the excluded? Do we identify prejudices and stereotypes that hinder our listening? How do we listen to the social and cultural context in which we live?



### 3. Speaking out

- All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, integrating freedom, truth and charity. How do we promote a free and authentic style of communication within the community and its organizations, without duplicity and opportunism? And in relation to the society of which we are a part? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us? How does the relationship with the media system (not only Catholic media) work? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?

## 4. Celebrating

“Journeying together” is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist. How do prayer and liturgical celebration inspire and direct our “journeying together”? How do they inspire the most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of all the Faithful in the liturgy and the exercise of the sanctifying function? What space is given to the exercise of the ministries of the reader and acolyte?

## 5. Co-responsible in the mission

•Synodality is at the service of the Church's mission, in which all her members are called to participate. Since we are all missionary disciples, how is each Baptized person called to be a protagonist in the mission? How does the community support its members committed to service in society (social and political commitments, in scientific research and teaching, in the promotion of social justice, in the protection of human rights, and in caring for the Common home, etc.)? How do you help them to live out these commitments in a logic of mission? How is discernment about mission-related choices made, and who participates in it? How are the different traditions that constitute the patrimony of many Churches, especially the Oriental ones, integrated and adapted, with respect to the Synodal style, in view of an effective Christian witness? How does collaboration work in territories where different Sui Iuris Churches are present?

## 6. Dialogue in church and society

• Dialogue is a path of perseverance that also includes silences and sufferings, but which is capable of gathering the experience of persons and peoples. What are the places and modes of dialogue within our particular Church? How are divergences of vision, the conflicts, and the difficulties addressed? How do we promote collaboration with neighboring Dioceses, with and among religious communities in the area, with and among lay associations and movements, etc.? What experiences of dialogue and shared commitment do we have with believers of other religions and with non-believers? How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the world of politics, economics, culture, civil society, the poor...?

## 7. Dialogue With the other Christian denominations

•The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one Baptism, has a special place in the Synodal journey. What relations do we have with the brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations? What areas do they concern? What fruits have we drawn from this “journeying together”? What are the difficulties?

## 8. Authority and participation

- A Synodal Church is a participatory and co-responsible Church. How do we identify the goals to be pursued, the way to achieve them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority exercised within our particular Church? What are the practices of teamwork and co-responsibility? How are lay ministries and the assumption of responsibility by the Faithful promoted? How do Synodal bodies function at the level of the particular Church? Are they a fruitful experience?

## 9. Discerning and deciding

•In a Synodal style, decisions are made through discernment, based on a consensus that flows from the common obedience to the Spirit. By what procedures and methods do we discern together and make decisions? How can they be improved? How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchically structured communities? How do we articulate the consultative phase with the deliberative one, the process of decision-making with the moment of decision-taking? How and with what tools do we promote transparency and accountability?

## 10. Forming ourselves in synodality

•The spirituality of journeying together is called to become an educational principle for the formation of the human person and of the Christian, of the families, and of the communities. How do we form people, especially those who hold roles of responsibility within the Christian community, to make them more capable of “journeying together,” listening to one another and engaging in dialogue? What formation do we offer for discernment and the exercise of authority? What tools help us to read the dynamics of the culture in which we are immersed and their impact on our style of Church?



## **PIT-FALLS TO AVOID AS WE UNDERTAKE THE SYNODAL PROCESS**

- As on any journey, we need to be aware of possible pitfalls that could hamper our progress during this time of synodality. The following are several pitfalls that must be avoided in order to promote the vitality and fruitfulness of the Synodal Process.

# **1. The temptation of wanting to lead ourselves instead of being led by God.**

- Synodality is not a corporate strategic exercise. Rather it is a spiritual process that is led by the Holy Spirit. We can be tempted to forget that we are pilgrims and servants on the path marked out for us by God. Our humble efforts of organization and coordination are at the service of God who guides us on our way. We are clay in the hands of the divine Potter (Isaiah 64:8).

## **2. The temptation to focus on ourselves and our immediate concerns**

- The Synodal Process is an opportunity to open up, to look around us, to see things from other points of view, and to move out in missionary outreach to the peripheries. This requires us to think long-term. This also means broadening our perspectives to the dimensions of the entire Church and asking questions, such as: What is God's plan for the Church here and now? How can we implement God's dream for the Church on the local level?

### 3. The temptation to only see “problems.”

- The challenges, difficulties, and hardships facing our world and our Church are many. Nevertheless, fixating on the problems will only lead us to be overwhelmed, discouraged, and cynical. We can miss the light if we focus only on the darkness. Instead of focusing only on what is not going well, let us appreciate where the Holy Spirit is generating life and see how we can let God work more fully.

## 4. The temptation of focusing only on structures.

- The Synodal Process will naturally call for a renewal of structures at various levels of the Church, in order to foster deeper communion, fuller participation, and more fruitful mission. At the same time, the experience of synodality should not focus first and foremost on structures, but on the experience of journeying together to discerning the path forward, inspired by the Holy Spirit. The conversion and renewal of structures will come about only through the ongoing conversion and renewal of all the members of the Body of Christ.

## 5. The temptation not to look beyond the visible confines of the Church.

• In expressing the Gospel in our lives, lay women and men act as a leaven in the world in which we live and work. A Synodal Process is a time to dialogue with people from the worlds of economics and science, politics and culture, arts and sport, the media and social initiatives. It will be a time to reflect on ecology and peace, life issues and migration. We must keep the bigger picture in view to fulfil our mission in the world. It is also an opportunity to deepen the ecumenical journey with other Christian denominations and to deepen our understanding with other faith traditions.

## 6. The temptation to lose focus of the objectives of the Synodal Process.

- As we proceed along the journey of the Synod, we need to be careful that, while our discussions might be wide-ranging, the Synodal Process maintains the goal of discerning how God calls us to walk forward together. No one Synodal Process is going to resolve all our concerns and problems. Synodality is an attitude and an approach of moving forward in a co-responsible way that is open to welcoming God's fruits together over time.

## 7. The temptation of conflict and division.

- “That they may all be one” (John 17:21). This is the ardent prayer of Jesus to the Father, asking for *unity* among his disciples. The Holy Spirit leads us deeper into *communion* with God and one another. The seeds of division bear no fruit. It is vain to try to impose one’s ideas on the whole Body through pressure or to discredit those who feel differently.



## 8. The temptation to treat the Synod as a kind of a parliament.

- This confuses synodality with a ‘political battle’ in which in order to govern one side must defeat the other. It is contrary to the spirit of synodality to antagonize others or to encourage divisive conflicts that threaten the unity and communion of the Church.

## 9. The temptation to listen only to those who are already involved in Church activities

This approach may be easier to manage, but it ultimately ignores a significant proportion of the People of God.

# THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION THAT GUIDES THE DISCUSSION

- *A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together:” How is this “journeying together” happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to make in order to grow in our “journeying together”?*
  - a) Recall our experiences** - What experiences of our local Church does this question call to mind?
  - b) Re-read these experiences in greater depth** - What joys did they bring? What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds did they reveal? What insights have they elicited?
  - c) Gather the fruits to share** - Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound? What is the Spirit asking of us? What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects of change, the steps to be taken? Where do we register a consensus? What paths are opening up for our local Church?

## Questionnaire for this synodal process:-

1. Considering the signs of our times, what steps is the Holy Spirit inviting us to take in order to grow as a Synodal Church in the third millennium?
  
2. **a)** In our Local Church, who are those who “walk together”?
  - b)** Who are those who seem further apart?

## Questionnaire for this synodal process:-

3. a) How is God speaking to us through the voices we sometimes ignore?
- b). How are the People of God listened to, in relation to the following:
  - i. The marginalized?
  - ii. The single mothers?
  - iii. The divorced?
- c) What facilitates our listening?
- d) What inhibits our listening?

## Questionnaire for this synodal process:-

4. a) How does the relationship with local media work?  
(Not only the Catholic media).

b) Who speaks on behalf of the Christian Community?

c) How are they chosen?

5. How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community?

## Questionnaire for this synodal process:-

**6. a)** What hinders the baptized from being active in the mission?

6. b) What are the areas of mission are we neglecting?

**7. a)** To what extend do diverse people in our community come together for dialogue?

7. b) What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church?

## Questionnaire for this synodal process:-

**8. a)** How are divergences of:

- i.** Vision addressed?
- ii.** Conflict addressed?
- iii.** Difficulties addressed?

**b)** What particular issue **in the Church** do we need to pay more attention to?

**c)** What particular issue **in the society** do we need to pay more attention to?



## Questionnaire for this synodal process:-

9. What relationships does your Church community have with other members of other Christian traditions and denominations?

## Questionnaire for this synodal process:-

**10. a)** How does your Church identify:

- i. The goals to be pursued
- ii. The way to reach them?
- iii. The steps to be taken?

b) How is authority exercised in our local Church?

c) How is governance exercised in our local Church?

## Questionnaire for this synodal process:-

**11. a)** How do we promote participation in decision making within the hierarchical structures?

**b)** Do our decision making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God?

12. What are:

a) The difficulties in our local Church?

b) The obstacles in our local Church?

c) The wounds in our local Church?

## Questionnaire for this synodal process:-

- **NOTE:** Tools like social media, virtual platforms and interactive technology could be used to reach out more people. The feedback should be given in writing. Other materials such as images, videos, stories, artistic expressions and personal testimonies can be submitted as attachments. This procedure will run from October 2021 up to end of February 2022. In March, all the data collected will be compiled into the Diocesan synthesis which our Bishop will send to the Episcopal Conference.

## Conclusion

We recall that the purpose of the Synod and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents. Rather, it is intended to plant and actualize dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions that enhance a journey of growing authentically towards the communion and mission that God calls the Church to live out in third millennium.

**The journey has already begun...**



For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission