



WHAT IS SYNODALITY?

BACKGROUND FOR THIS SYNOD

As the Church embarks on this synodal journey, we must strive to ground ourselves in experiences of authentic listening and discernment on the path of becoming the Church that God calls us to be.

By convening this Synod, Pope Francis invites the entire Church to reflect on a theme that is decisive for its life and mission: *“It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.”*³ Following in the wake of the renewal of the Church proposed by the Second Vatican Council, this common journey together is both a gift and a task. By reflecting together on our journey so far, the diverse members of the Church learn from one another's experiences and perspectives, guided by the Holy Spirit (PD, 1). Enlightened by God's Word and united in prayer, we will discern the processes to seek God's will and pursue the pathways to which God calls us – towards deeper communion, fuller participation, and greater openness to fulfilling our mission in the world. The International Theological Commission (ITC) describes synodality this way:

‘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. 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).

First and foremost, synodality 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.

In this sense, synodality enables the entire People of God to walk forward together, listening to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, to participate in the mission of the Church in the communion that Christ establishes between us. This “walking together” is the most effective way of putting into practice the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God (PD, 1).

The entire People of God shares a common dignity and vocation through Baptism. All of us are called by virtue of our Baptism to be active participants in the life of the Church. In parishes, small Christian communities, lay movements, religious communities, and other forms of communion, women and men, young people and the elderly, we are all invited to listen to one another in order to hear the promptings of the Holy Spirit, who comes to guide our human efforts, breathing life and vitality into the Church and leading us into deeper communion for our mission in the world. As the Church embarks on this synodal journey, we must strive to ground ourselves in experiences of authentic listening and discernment on the path of becoming the Church that God calls us to be.

(Vad 1.2)

3 FRANCIS, Address for the ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops (17 October 2015).

