

FROM THE VATICAN OFFICE OF THE SYNOD 'How to be a synodal Church in mission?'
A SUMMARY.

At the end of their meeting on 5 December, the members of the Synod of Bishops produced the *Synthesis Report* to be discussed before the Second Session Synod of Bishops (October 2024). Now the Synod Office have issued these **guidelines** in which *the deepening of synodality in a missionary perspective and the broadening of experiences of synodality at the local level* are meant to be the cornerstones on which the local communities are called to reflect. "The Synod is about synodality and not about this or that theme... The important thing is *how* the reflection is done, that is, in a synodal way". (Pope Francis) It offers a **unified yet differentiated path** says **Cardinal Mario Grech**, Secretary General of the Synod, adding, "This is already a synodal way of working in the Church where each person cooperates for the good of all according to his or her vocation".

The **diocese** is asked:

1) TO DEEPEN THE PROCESS. By reflecting on the theme of '*differentiated co-responsibility in the mission*' of all members of the People of God. It is asked to carry out a further consultation, involving **people and groups (parish priests, participation bodies, synodal teams, etc.) who express a variety of experiences, skills, charisms, ministries** within the Church focusing on "*how*" to grow as a synodal Church. In this sense, the involvement of **experts and academic institutions** in the area is indispensable, so that **the contribution of theological and canonical expertise, as well as the relevant human and social sciences, can be present;**

2) TO BROADEN THE EXPERIENCES OF SYNODALITY: to continue to grow as a synodal church on mission, with training and listening experiences that also involve those who have not been touched by the process so far, groups living in conditions of poverty and social marginality as well as Christians of different denominations and people of other religions; to collect and transmit testimonies and best practices to be sent to the Synod Secretariat through the Bishops' Conference. To help there is a work sheet to help continue the synodal journey available at [synod.va](https://www.vatican.va/synod.va).

The **Bishops' Conference** is asked to promote reflection on differentiated co-responsibility with regard to mission and to send the results to the General Secretariat

of the Synod by 15 May.

The **General Secretariat of the Synod** will promote and coordinate reflection on some "major" issues in the *Synthesis Report* that must be handled at the level of the whole Church and in collaboration with the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia. A report on the progress of this work will be presented at the Second Session in October 2024.

The DOCUMENT is available in [ENG](#) The News Release is also available in [ENG](#) The WORKSHEET is available in [ENG](#).

PERSONAL COMMENT

I have shortened and simplified the technical document which you can access IN FULL at [ENG](#) above. I expect it, plus the 'Worksheet', will be 'translated' and broken down for parish/school/group use by the Synodal Navigators of the diocese. It needs to be! I think it may be generally difficult for most parishes to connect with any DEEPENING or BROADENING of the Synodal Process. On average, only 8% of the laity have been involved nationally and 2/3rds of the clergy are in various stages of disconnection and hence their parishes too. A huge effort to DEEPEN AND BROADEN the synodal experiences by training and listening to one another would enable us to turn outwards to the important 'others' mentioned. Parishes would need support in identifying and in building any mechanisms for listening to members of other communities etc. Such mechanisms may exist in some parishes and we could all learn from them.

I remain hopeful but daunted by the synodal task leading up to its final formal session in autumn 2024. Synodality is not yet part of the fabric of the majority of diocesan or parish structures – but the meeting in 2024 is but the on-going expression of a process which in the Holy Spirit's book will likely take a few life-times! It is only from synodality as the face of the Church, its 'default position', part of its DNA that there will be the emergence of a renewed missionary Church. We can start!

David Jackson (Dec 2023)