

SYNODAL CHURCH IN MISSIONARY OUTREACH

1A

1. Synodality

The word “synodality” means “walking together.” “Walking together” is what characterizes the Church. From the beginning, Christians were called “those who follow the Way” (Acts 22:4), and it was characteristic of the community of disciples to go “two by two” (Lk 10:1). Therefore, the novelty of synodality today is to again clothe ourselves in this way of being Church, to return to being a missionary community of disciples.

A. Ecclesial Communities in “Synodal Mode”

Faith, hope, and charity make sense and are nourished only in community life. A person of faith cannot mature apart from the community of believers. It is a contradiction to think that faith is a personal privilege that enables the believer to maintain a one-on-one relationship with God without passing through the community of disciples. God, One and Triune, is a community of life and mission, and He has created humanity in His image and likeness (Gen 1:26). It is urgent for the Church today, as communities of missionary disciples, to renew the spirit and commitment of community.



First moment: WORD OF GOD

Opening prayer

God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who called us to life and communion with You. Pour out in us the spirit of children to be docile to your Word, to be awoken to the signs of our time, and to be attentive to the voice of our brothers and sisters. Enlighten our minds and hearts to discern our way according to your will. We ask you this, Lord, through the intercession of Saint Arnold Janssen. Amen.

Proclamation: Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Resonances of the Word

The text mentions many details of community life. Let’s take some time to reread the text personally and allow these elements to inhabit our thoughts and feelings.

- “Devoted”, “meeting together” = remaining present and united in spirit
- “The believers” = those who had trusted in Jesus of Nazareth
- “Breaking the bread,” “fraction of the bread,” “eating together,” “sharing and distributing”



Second moment: OUR WORD AS A CHURCH

Church in 'synodal mode'

Our ecclesial image and our way of being Church today is synodal. It is a way of accompanying one another on the journey, of praying, listening, and dialoguing, rooted in the Word and immersed in the baptismal vocation we have received. The synodal perspective contributes, among other things, to renewing the forms: a prayer open to participation, discernment lived together, a missionary energy that comes from sharing and illuminates our service. The importance of this synodal way of being must be highlighted in relation to the variety of charisms and ministries that shape the particular face of the Church. The Church recognizes that synodality is an integral part of her nature. Being a synodal Church is expressed in ecumenical Councils, Synods of Bishops, diocesan Synods, and in diocesan and parish Councils. There are already many ways to experience forms of “synodality” throughout the Church. However, being a synodal Church is not limited to these existing institutions. In fact, synodality is not so much an event or a slogan; rather, it is a style and a way of being with which the Church lives her mission in the world. The mission of the Church requires that all the People of God be on a journey, with each member playing their crucial role, united with one another. A synodal Church walks in communion to pursue a common mission, through the participation of all its members. The goal of this Synodal Process is not to provide a temporary or one-time experience of synodality; rather, it is to offer an opportunity for the entire People of God to discern together how to move forward in the journey to become a more synodal Church in the long term.

Resonances

In light of what we heard:

- What characteristics define our local believing community? (name them without debating; just take note)
- What characteristics define us as members of the same community? (name them briefly without going into anecdotes; just take note)



Third moment: WORDS OF ACTION

Steps of Personal Conversion


Listening to the Word and to my brothers and sisters, I believe it is necessary to grow in...

Steps of Community Conversion

Discerning the journey of our ecclesial community in this particular context, we believe it is necessary to grow in..., and we will do so with the help of these concrete steps...

Closing Prayer

What image or symbol helps us express what we have shared in a prayerful way?



SYNODAL CHURCH IN MISSIONARY OUTREACH

1B

1. Synodality

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B. LISTENING TO THE SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the main protagonist of our ecclesial life and mission. He helps us understand the Word, leads us into the mystery of the life and project of Jesus of Nazareth, and inspires us to grow as a missionary and testimonial community. Our Church’s journey shows that we need to give back to the Spirit of God the central role in the mission. This implies making sure that all ecclesial community structures are placed under His guidance and impulse.



First moment: WORD OF GOD

Opening prayer

Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life. You who help us understand the project of Jesus, assist us in our encounter. Grant us the gift of deep, attentive, empathetic, and fraternal listening. May your voice be stronger than ours, and may we hear it as a community. Challenge us, move us, so that we may foster everything that contributes to the growth of each one and to the good of all. We ask you this, Lord, through the intercession of Saint Arnold Janssen. Amen.

Proclamation: Rom 8:26-30

In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what the intention of the Spirit is, because it intercedes for the holy ones according to God’s will. We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified.

Resonances of the Word

The Holy Spirit is God Himself acting in each one of us and in the community of faith. Let us reread the text to perceive the action of the Spirit within us.

- The Spirit ‘comes to help’, ‘intercedes’, ‘searches the hearts’
- “Predestine” = God chose us from eternity to be in Christ



Second moment: OUR WORD AS A CHURCH

Listening to the Spirit

Conversation in the Holy Spirit is an instrument that, despite its limitations, proves fruitful in allowing for authentic listening and discerning what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. Spiritual conversation focuses on the quality of the listening ability, as well as the quality of the words spoken. This means paying attention to the spiritual movements in oneself and in others during the conversation, requiring attention to something beyond the words spoken. This attentiveness is an act of respect, acceptance, and hospitality toward others as they are. It is an approach that takes seriously what happens in the hearts of those who are conversing.

There are two fundamental attitudes necessary in this process: actively listening and speaking from the heart. The goal of spiritual conversation is to create an atmosphere of trust and welcome, so that people can express themselves more freely. This helps them take seriously what is happening within them as they listen to others and speak. Ultimately, this inner attention makes us more aware of the presence and participation of the Holy Spirit in the process of sharing and discerning. Spiritual conversation focuses on the person we are listening to, on ourselves, and on what we are experiencing at a spiritual level. The fundamental question is: “What is happening in the other person and in me, and how is the Lord acting in this?”

Resonances

In light of what we heard:

- What can we say about the central place and role of the Holy Spirit in our community?
- What are the implications of ‘discerning in the Spirit’ all our decision making processes and activities?



Third moment: WORDS OF ACTION

Steps of Personal Conversion

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Closing Prayer

What image or symbol helps us express what we have shared in a prayerful way?

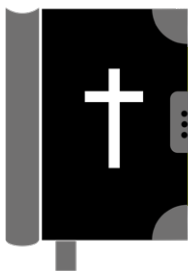


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C. CENTRALITY OF THE WORD

The Word of God is alive and gives life, renews, purifies, enlightens, and helps us deepen and live out our faith. In It, we find God’s plan, His desire to communicate Himself and to give Himself to humanity. The Word found its most sublime expression in the mystery of the Incarnation (Jn 1:14), in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Every ecclesial community is born and strengthened in the Word and the Spirit.



First Moment: WORD OF GOD

Opening prayer

Speak, Lord, for our ears and hearts long to hear You. Our whole being yearns to be transformed by your Word of life. Encourage us in our discouragement. Correct us in our stumbling. Nourish our hope. Strengthen our faith. Increase our charity. We want to shine with your light, spread the Gospel with your Spirit, and build the community from your plan of life. We ask you this, Lord, through the intercession of Saint Arnold Janssen. Amen.

Proclamation: Is 55:10-11

For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down, and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats, so shall my Word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it.

Resonances of the Word

The ‘cycle of the Word’ has an origin, a mission, and a goal; it generates life along its way and transforms reality. Let each one reread the text to appreciate internally the journey of the Word.



Second moment: OUR WORD AS A CHURCH

Centrality of the Word

The Word of the Lord precedes all words of the Church. The words of the disciples, even those of a synod, are only an echo of what He Himself says. The Word comes to us with a concrete purpose. Since time immemorial, the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, have been at the center of the life of the Church. In the Gospels, Jesus often cites the prophets and the Psalms. Also, in the Gospels and the Epistles, we find that the words of the prophets offer guidance to understand who Jesus is. Likewise, it is Jesus who becomes the new source of understanding for the books of the Old Testament, the promise of God, and the hope that confirms its fulfillment.

For the Church and for all, Scripture, especially the New Testament, is an encounter with Christ and with the Father whom He reveals. Through the silent and subtle action of the Holy Spirit, the words of Scripture become living words in the Church. They renew, inspire, and uplift our hearts and imaginations to perceive God's redeeming and healing love acting in our lives, in our Church, and in our world. The Word of God is truly our 'food for the journey,' so that, no matter how difficult or exhausting it may seem, the weary and afflicted soul is refreshed and comforted (Jer 31:25). For the Word of the Lord is like a stream of water in a dry land, springing up to eternal life (Jn 4:14). For this reason, Scripture is the foundation and core of the synodal journey. By reading and praying with it, we are united to Christ, and we feel united to our Church and to our world through the eyes of faith. Just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we can experience our hearts burning within us thanks to the life of the Holy Spirit, and we know that He is always with us "until the end of the world" (Mt 28:20).

Resonances

In light of what we heard:

- What place does the Word of God hold in our ecclesial life in comparison to our own words?
- What are the clear signs of community transformation through the action of the Word?



Third moment: WORDS OF ACTION

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