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***“Synodality is the way of being the Church today according to the will of God, in a dynamic of discerning and listening together to the voice of the Holy Spirit.”***

*Pope Francis*

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## A Synodal Church

Synod ('walking together') describes structures that embody the ecclesiology of Vatican II

- “*Lumen Gentium* sets out a vision of the nature and mission of the Church as **communion** ... her nature as **People of God** on **pilgrimage** through history towards the heavenly homeland, in which all her members are by virtue of **baptism** honoured with the same dignity as children of God and appointed to the same **mission**.”  
(ITC, *Synodality*, n. 40)



“In the gift and commitment of [trinitarian] **communion** can be found the source, the form and the scope of synodality, inasmuch as it expresses the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the [pilgrim] **People of God** in the responsible and ordered participation of all its members in discerning and putting into practice ways of fulfilling its **mission**.”  
(ITC, *Synodality*, n. 43)

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## Pope Francis on the Synod



The Synod is neither a convention, nor a ‘parlour’, a parliament nor senate, where people make deals and reach a consensus. The Synod is rather an **ecclesial expression**, i.e., the Church that **journeys together to understand reality with the eyes of faith and with the heart of God** ... The Synod is not a parliament in which to reach a consensus or a common accord by taking recourse to negotiation, to deal-making, or to compromise: indeed, the only method of the Synod is to **open oneself up to the Holy Spirit** with apostolic **courage**, with evangelical **humility** and confident, trusting **prayer**.

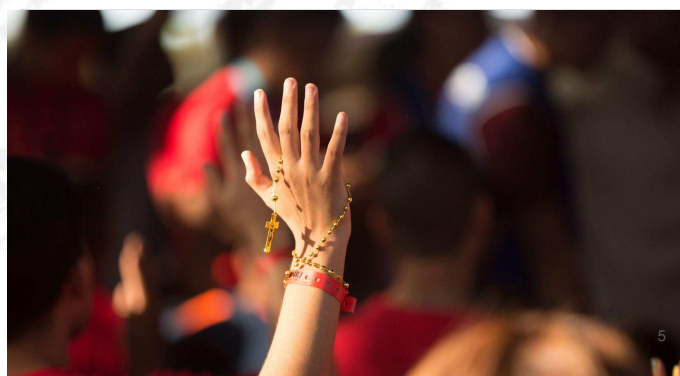
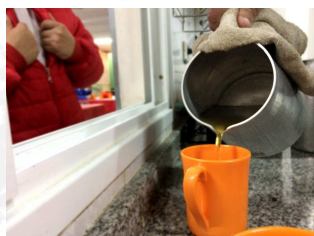
in order that he guide us, enlighten us and make us keep before our eyes, not our personal opinions, but with faith in God, fidelity to the Magisterium, the good of the Church and the *salus animarum*.

Opening of Synod for the Family, 29 October 2015

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### Key convictions for a Synodal Church

- Listen to one another  
in order to listen to the Holy Spirit
- In a spirit of prayer,  
grounded in liturgy and the Word of God
- A way of being Church, not a one-time event
- An experience shared with one another  
(communion)
- Discerning together so that decisions are made  
for the good of all (participation)
- To renew our prophetic witness  
to the human family (mission)



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## Truth-telling and Dialogue: Speak boldly, Listen humbly

"I wish, therefore, at the beginning of the Synod Assembly, to invite everyone to speak with courage and frankness ... Only dialogue can help us grow. An honest, transparent critique is constructive and helpful ... And **humility in listening** must correspond to **courage in speaking**. I told the young people in the pre-Synod Meeting: 'If you say something I do not like, I have to listen even more, because everyone has the right to be heard, just as everyone has the right to speak'. This open listening requires courage in speaking ... It is this listening that creates space for **dialogue** ... To speak frankly and listen openly are fundamental if the Synod is to be a process of **discernment**. Discernment is ... an *interior attitude* rooted in *an act of faith*. Discernment is the method and at the same time the goal we set ourselves: it is based on the conviction that **God is at work** in world history, in life's events, in the people I meet and who speak to me." (Pope Francis, Opening of the Synod on Young People, 3 October 2018)

*'Give us the **courage** to tell our stories and to **speak boldly** of your truth.  
Give us ears to **listen humbly** to each other and a **discerning heart** to hear what you are saying.'*  
(Plenary Council prayer)

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## Dialogue at the Plenary Council

- Shared commitment to ensure positive outcome
  - The failed vote could not be the last word
- Courageous speaking
  - Not just about boldness
  - All affected viscerally
    - had spoken from head (exchange of ideas)
    - needed to speak from heart  
(putting myself on the line; lived experience of how I am affected)
- Humble listening
  - listen in a way that is open to conversion
  - listening from heart rather than with intellectual response or counter-argument
  - open to learning = letting go = costly listening
  - content of text didn't change much, but people felt heard, and appreciated/valued other views differently



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## Learnings about Dialogue from the Plenary Council

- Process of learning (rather than convincing!)
- Conversion: openness to the Holy Spirit
- Don't conclude decision-making and discerning until it is clear that there is consensus about a way forward
- Voting?
  - Adversarial
  - Winner takes all
  - Minority/periphery marginalised
  - Avoid as much as possible

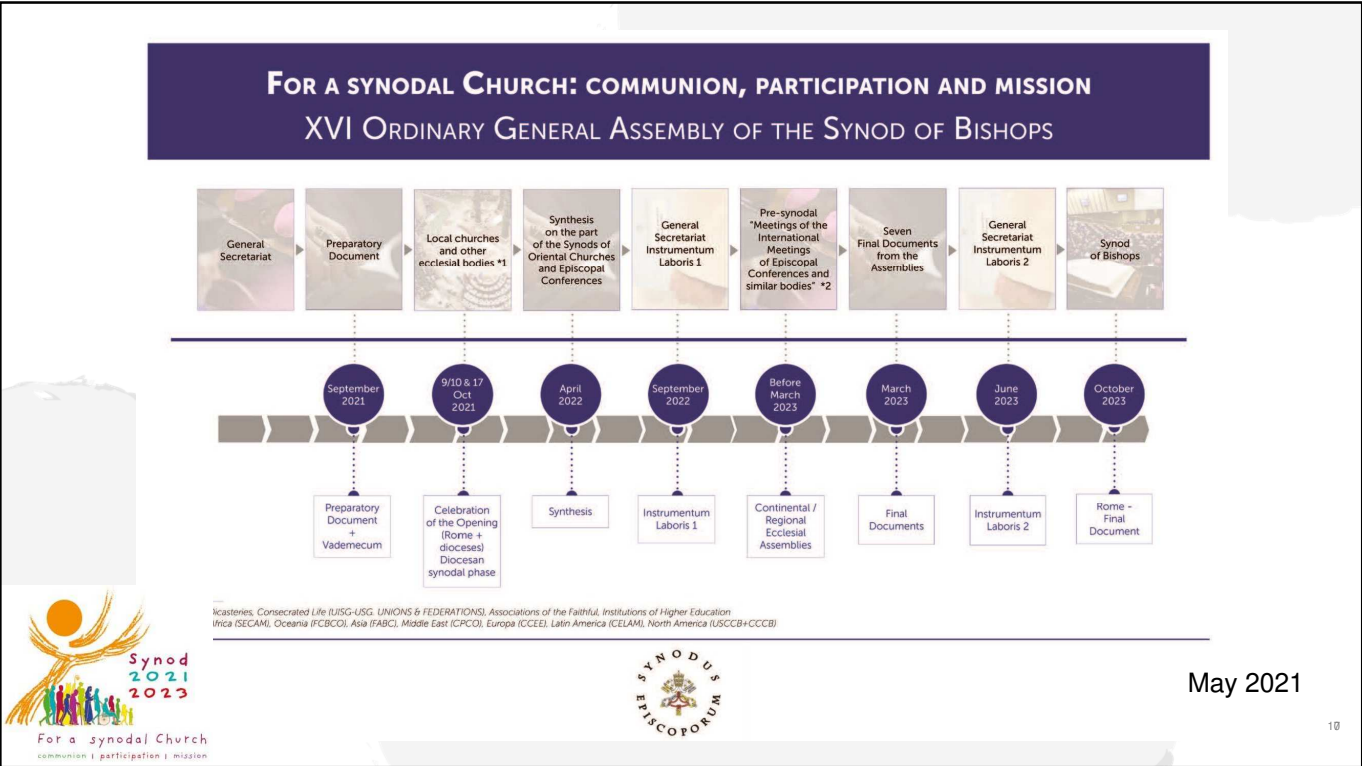


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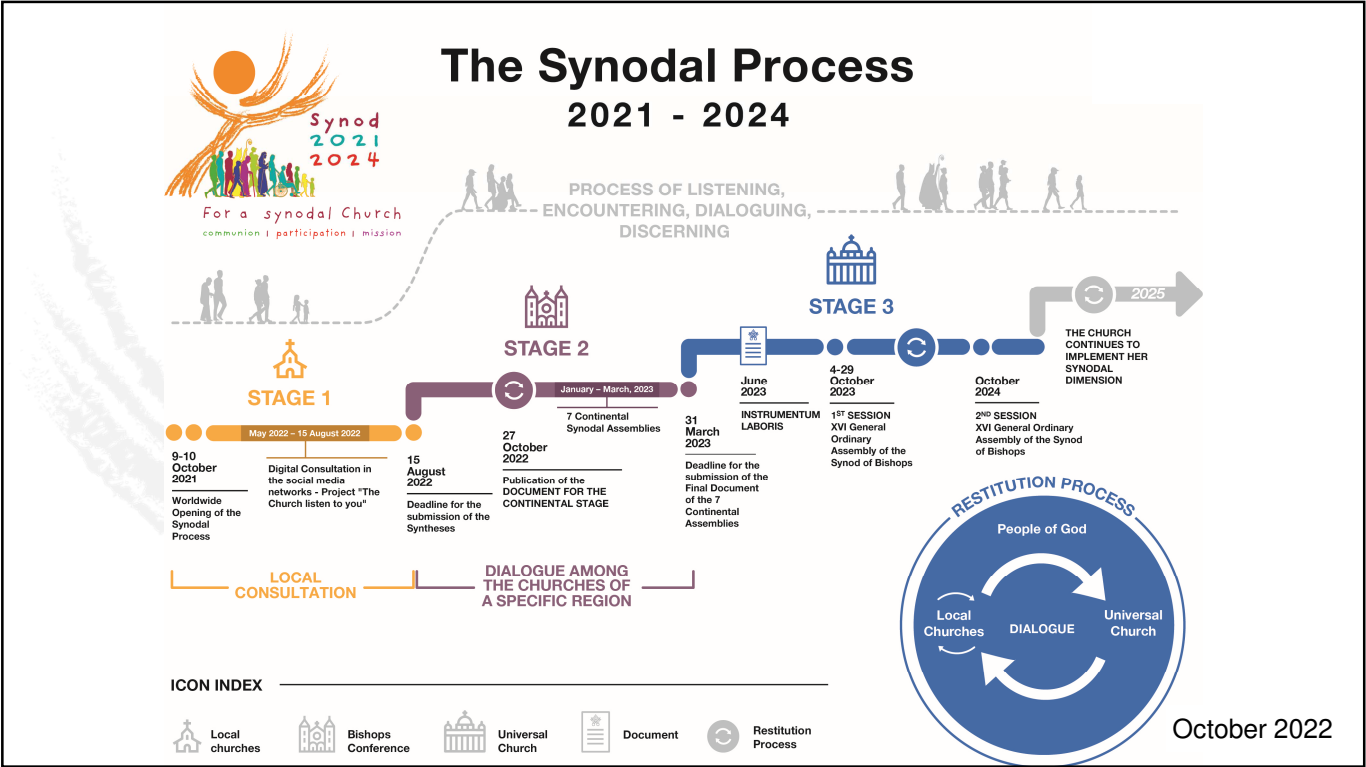
Circularity of Dialogue

- “The circularity of the *sensus fidei* with which all the faithful are endowed, the discernment carried out at the various levels on which synodality works and the authority of those who exercise the pastoral ministry of unity and governance shows the dynamic of synodality. This circularity promotes the baptismal dignity and coresponsibility of all, makes the most of the presence in the People of God of charisms dispensed by the Holy Spirit, recognises the specific ministry of Pastors in collegial and hierarchical communion with the Bishop of Rome, and guarantees that synodal processes and events unfold in conformity with the depositum fidei and involve listening to the Holy Spirit, for the renewal of the Church’s mission.” (ITC, *Synodality*, n. 72)
- “The implementation in the local Church and on every level of the circular relationship between the ministry of Pastors, the participation and co-responsibility of lay people, the stimulus coming from the charismatic gifts according to the dynamic circular link between ‘one’, ‘some’ and all’.” (ITC, *Synodality*, n. 106a)

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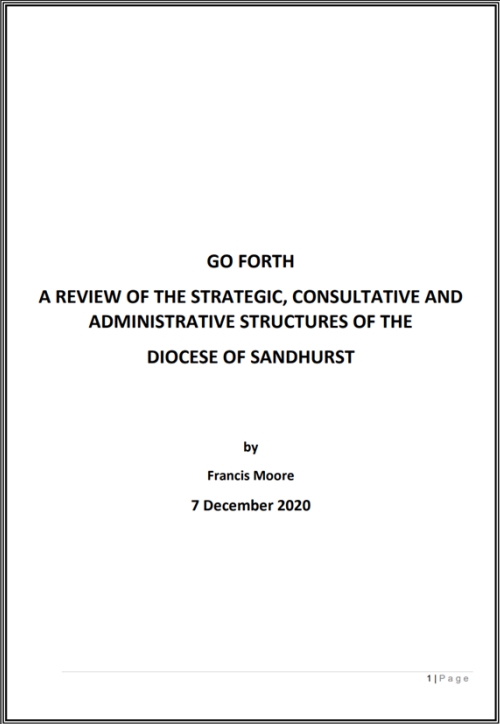
## The Aim of the Synod: The Synodal Conversion of the Church

Renewing our structures and processes so that  
all can participate in a trinitarian communion that lives out  
a shared commitment to Jesus' mission

*"We are learning to walk together, and sit together to break the one  
bread, in such a way that each is able to find their place.  
Everyone is called to take part in this journey, no one is excluded.  
To this we feel called so that we can credibly proclaim the Gospel of  
Jesus to all people." (DCS, n. 103)*

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**Diocesan Assembly**



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**Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council**



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