

Synod – Synodality – Participation

What is the meaning of Synod?

“Synod” is an ancient and venerable word in the Tradition of the Church..., whose meaning draws on the deepest themes of Revelation. Composed of a preposition *συν* (with) and the noun *ὁδός* (path), 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” ... Synodality ought to be expressed in the Church’s ordinary way of living and working. Synodality is an essential dimension of the Church... Through synodality, the Church reveals and configures herself as the Pilgrim People of God and as the assembly convoked by the risen Lord...Synodality ought to be expressed in the Church’s ordinary way of living and working... This *modus vivendi et operandi* works through the community listening to the Word and celebrating the Eucharist, the brotherhood of communion and the co-responsibility and participation of the whole People of God in its life and mission, on all levels and distinguishing between various ministries and roles.

Biblical Texts "Where two or three meet in my name, I am there among them" (*Matthew 18,20*); "look. I am with you always; yes, to the end of the world" (*Mt 28:20*). "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..." (*Acts 15:28*)

Historical developments

Since the **first centuries**, the word “synod” has been applied, with a specific meaning, to the ecclesial assemblies convoked on various levels (diocesan, provincial, regional, patriarchal or universal) to discern, by the light of the Word of God and listening to the Holy Spirit, the doctrinal, liturgical, canonical and pastoral questions that arise as time goes by. Since the beginning of the Second Millennium, synodal procedure gradually took on different forms in the East and in the West, particularly after the breakdown of communion between the Church of Constantinople and the Church of Rome (11th century) and when ecclesiastical territories belonging to the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem came under the political control of Islam.

In response to the crisis triggered off by the **Protestant Reformation**, the Catholic Church held the Council of Trent... The Council established the norm that diocesan Synods should take place annually, provincial Synods every three years. The ecclesial communities born of the Protestant Reformation promote a certain kind of synodal approach, in the context of an ecclesiology and a sacramental and ministerial doctrine and practice which depart from Catholic Tradition.

Saint John Paul II, on the occasion of the Jubilee Year 2000, offered an assessment of the path that had been travelled to incarnate - in conformity with the teaching of Vatican II. Much has been done..."but there is certainly much more to be done, in order to realise all the potential of these instruments of communion ...(and) to respond promptly and effectively to the issues which the Church must face in these rapidly changing times."

Pope Francis

teaches that to “walk together is *the constitutive way* of the Church; *the figure* that enables us to interpret reality with the eyes and heart of God; *the condition* for following the Lord Jesus and being servants of life in this wounded time. The breath and pace of the Synod show what we are... In this way can we truly renew our pastoral ministry and adapt it to the mission of the Church in today’s world; only in this way can we address the complexity of this time, thankful for the journey accomplished thus far, and determined to continue it with *parrhesia*”. The *parrhesia* of the Spirit required the People of God on its synodal journey is the trust, frankness and courage to "enter into the expanse of God’s horizon"... May Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, who "joined the disciples in praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit (*cf. Acts 1,14*), and thus made possible the missionary outburst which took place at Pentecost, accompany the synodal pilgrimage of the People of God, pointing the way and teaching us the beautiful, tender and strong style of this new phase of evangelisation.

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.